





# ROMANTICS

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6pm C2 C3 C4 C5 C6 QUEEN ELIZABETH HALL

<b>FAUST</b> Goethe's masterpiece in the translation by Louis MacNeice A preview of the anniversary broadcast <b>GARY BOND</b> BBC RADIO DRAMA COMPANY	MON 20
<b>SIR WALTER SCOTT</b> A blend of words and music about the greatest of all the early Romantic English prose writers <b>SONGMAKERS' ALMANAC</b>	TUE 21
<b>JOHN KEATS</b> The poems and letters of the dying poet to Fanny Brawne One of the greatest of Romantic epistles <b>BBC BARBARA LEON HUNT &amp; RICHARD PASCO</b>	WED 22
<b>HYENAS IN PETTICOATS</b> She married Shelley, wrote Frankenstein, but she never met her mother, Mary Wollstonecraft <b>SARAH MILES JOHN JUSTIN</b>	THU 23
<b>BYRON: A PRIVATE VIEW</b> The most celebrated and most notorious of all the British Romantics His verse and outrageous life <b>ALAN BATES FREDERIC RAPHAELE</b>	FRI 24

QUEEN ELIZABETH HALL 8.45 pm C2 C3 C4 C5 C6

<b>SCHUMANN DUO RECITAL</b> Helm and Eichenlaub songs, Dichterlieder <b>ERNEST HARTLEY (soprano) JEROME ROSE (piano)</b>	MON 20
<b>CHILDIRIAN QUARTET</b> Resonantly Quirky no 3 in C, Beethoven Appassionata cello sonata & C major quartet, Schubert <b>ROBERT COHEN (cello) ROGER VIGNOLES (piano)</b>	TUE 21
<b>SONG CYCLE</b> Do Winterreise, Schubert <b>ROBERT TEAR (soprano) with PHILIP LEDGER (piano)</b>	WED 22
<b>THE ROMANTIC GUITAR</b> Marlborough, Magic Flute, Romance Variations - Sor & Paganini Songs - Schubert, Weber, Sor, Beethoven <b>CARLOS BONIS (guitar) JENNIFER SMITH (soprano)</b>	THU 23
<b>ENGLISH CHAMBER ORCHESTRA</b> Conduct PINCHAS STEINBERG Symphony no 3 in D Major, Schubert Concerto in D major, Paganini & Anna Schumann <b>AARON ROSAND (violin) JEROME ROSE (piano)</b>	FRI 24

<b>THE ROMANTICS LECTURES</b> PURCELL ROOM NATIONAL FILM THEATRE 2pm EXPLORATIONS £2.00 4.15pm FINE ART £2.00	
<b>THE ROMANTIC SPIRIT</b> MON <b>THE ROMANTIC GERMAN</b> MON <b>GEORGE STEINER</b> MON <b>DR WILLIAM VAUGHAN</b> MON	
<b>THE BIRTH OF ROMANTIC OPERA</b> TUE <b>FRANCE - THE CULT OF THE HERO</b> TUE <b>JOHN WARRACK</b> TUE <b>MARYANNE STEVENS MA</b> TUE	
<b>WORDSWORTH &amp; BYRON</b> WED <b>BRITISH ROMANTIC LANDSCAPE</b> WED <b>CHRISTOPHER RICKES</b> WED <b>PROF MICHAEL HATTON</b> WED	
<b>WHERE WERE THE WOMEN?</b> THU <b>DELAUDER BEFORE DISILLUSION</b> THU <b>GERMAINE GREER</b> THU <b>MICHAEL WILSON MA</b> THU	
<b>TWO REVOLUTIONS</b> FRI <b>GOYA</b> FRI <b>RICHARD COBB FRA</b> FRI <b>DR SARAH SYMMONS</b> FRI	

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## THE TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT

JULY 10 1981

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# Victim of the Fourth Republic

By Douglas Johnson

JEAN LACOUTURE:  
Pierre Mendès France  
547pp. Paris: Seuil.

The French are strong on protocol. The more republican the régime the more ceremonial its etiquette. When, on May 21 last, François Mitterrand was officially proclaimed fourth President of the Fifth Republic, the Salle des Fêtes of the Elysée Palace was crowded with the representatives of the various corps and institutions of the Republic. But as the distant guns boomed out their salute, Mitterrand's emphysematically one man who did not present anything of anybody, but who was there simply in his own right. To Pierre Mendès France the new President said that it was thanks to him that he was there, that his presence in the Elysée was "la justification de tant d'années dont vous avez été l'initiateur". With great ceremony he gave him the accolade.

When one says that Mendès France (the name, Jean Lacouture establishes, must not be hyphenated) was not representing any group or institution, that is true enough. But he represented something more, something uniquely personal. It is not merely that he has always been regarded as a man of unusual ability, in his time the youngest barrister and the youngest deputy in France, and then the youngest to hold a ministerial post, an expert on economic affairs at a time when French political culture was notably ignorant in this domain, a redoubtable and forceful political figure who has had to be taken seriously by all parties. Nor is it simply a matter of his honesty and sincerity, of his position as a statesman who has never sought the easy way out, who has always taken a stand on matters of principle and has readily assumed the responsibilities both of office and of resignation. The reputation of Mendès France is the equivalent of a legend, but a legend shot through with the nostalgia of the "jamaïs arrivé", of what might have been.

It is as if many Frenchmen are ashamed of their country's recent past. Is this because Gaullism and post-Gaullism were a defeat for liberalism, because they stand for a narrow and antiquated nationalism, for a blatant inequality in social conditions and opportunities, and a complacent and distasteful preoccupation with material achievement? Whatever the reason, there is still a long-standing guilt over the disappointments of the Liberation, the failures of the Fourth Republic, the degradation of colonial wars and the inadequacies of France in the contemporary world. There is a lack of correlation between the ambitions and assumptions acknowledged by a great variety of French people and their recognized achievements. There is a tendency to look back regretfully: if only Mendès had been in power, if only post-war France had turned to Mendès, if only the Fourth Republic had availed itself of the talented and clear-sighted leader whom it instead chose to neglect and to reject.

This legend of the "jamaïs arrivé" (not dissimilar to the legends in other countries surrounding such figures as Adlai Stevenson or Hugh Gaitskell) was, like all the best myths, founded on a basis of reality. At 3 o'clock on the afternoon of June 17, 1954, Pierre Mendès France went to the tribune of the Assemblée Nationale in Paris. He was then aged forty-seven and had been a deputy since 1932. He had served as a junior Treasury minister in Léon Blum's government just before the war, he had joined General de Gaulle in London and had been his minister both in Algiers and in the France of the Liberation; he was president of the Assembly Commission of Finance but he had not held any governmental office for nine years. His speech, in which he sought to be invested with the powers of forming a government, was sensational. Although the Chamber of Deputies was the natural centre for cynicism, and although the great French game of politics was played above all by the

blasés, the cautious and the self-seeking, Mendès France sent a thrill of amazement and enthusiasm throughout the political world. Within four weeks, he promised, he would bring the French war in Indo-China to an end. If not, he would resign as Prime Minister.

This war had been dragging on for a long time. It had reached an apparent climax six weeks earlier with the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu, but the beleaguered French army was living in apprehension of an even bloodier outcome. Thus Mendès France, with his defiant waver of bringing about a peace, offered a dramatic way out of the deadlock. And this was not all. As in an earlier and unsuccessful attempt to form a government, in 1953, he drew attention to the economic backwardness of the country, to the confusion which surrounded its place in Europe, and to the uncertainties which necessarily dogged a nation that had lost its sense of reality. It was his intention, he claimed, to

But of course it could not last. The man who had made peace was the man who had accepted defeat. Decolonization could be described as the betrayal of the French empire. The abandonment of an impossible treaty was said to be the destruction of a noble ideal, of a united and prosperous Europe, freed from the threats of war, communism, nationalism or economic crisis. The attempt to reform the economy was seen as a sign of *châtisme*, interference, technocratic intervention in fundamental liberties. The whole Mendès France episode was depicted as a scandalous aberration, an extraordinary intermezzo during which the affairs of France had been entrusted to an adventurer, an outsider, someone who was not properly French, a Jew, a sensation-seeker, a self-styled superman. And soon a coalition of communists, Europeanists and nationalists, joining up with the lobbyists organized by alcohol distillers, bankers and Algerian settlers who believed that the government was threatening their in-

commentator on both history and politics, increasing ill-health has limited his rôle as a practising politician. While other Prime Ministers have been relegated to the sidelines like founding dervishes, but have been seen as still held in reserve for the Republic, Mendès France has remained as a sad, emphatic reproach to all those who so readily abandoned him.

Jean Lacouture has written a major biography of this important, inescapable, haunting figure. Written with the full co-operation of Mendès France and his family, and with long statements quoted in it from its subject himself, it is perhaps inevitable that it should suffer, if that is the right word, from a tendency to admire. We are even given glimpses of a romantic Mendès France, far removed from the serious technocrat and rigorous economist, who was tempted to keep the false identity he had used during the Occupation, to settle down and lead a new existence, or who, in 1968, en route for the announcement of the

the tergiversations of Robert Schuman, Guy Mollet, René Mayer, Georges Bidault and other members of "le club européen" had been looked on with toleration, the hesitant attitude of Mendès France, an intruder and an upstart, was considered to be intolerable and the most sinister projects were attributed to the French Prime Minister, who was wittily given the nickname of "Mendès-Kerensky". "I've been told some very dirty things about you", said John Foster Dulles to Mendès France one evening in the summer of 1954; "I hope you haven't paid too much for them", was the reply.

Almost certainly the treaty would never have got through the Assembly. Joseph Laniel, Mendès France's predecessor as Prime Minister, had advised him not to put it unchanged before Parliament. But once his attempts to modify the treaty had failed (and those French Europeanists who put treaty before country, and who weakened the negotiating position of their Prime Minister by intriguing against him in Brussels, must take some responsibility for that failure) then Mendès France did the only possible thing and allowed the Assembly to decide. It is difficult to believe that its rejection there set France back by four years, as Monnet claimed. It is easier to imagine, and Lacouture quotes a former supporter of the treaty as saying just this, how the Gaullists and the Communists would have paraded in front of every war memorial in the country, and raised the cry of treason as the French army disappeared into the Community Defence force. However, if treason was mentioned, the opponents had another card up their sleeve. Within the government of "Monsieur Mendès-curieuseusement-surnommé-France", there was a definite traitor - the Minister of the Interior, François Mitterrand.

At least the Communists have always been open and clear in their hostility to Mendès France. Their consistency is such that when, in the run-up to the recent Presidential election, Mendès France explained his ideas on the necessity for a carefully planned and austere economic programme to be devised with the consent of French workers, the Party newspaper *L'Humanité* denounced this in terms of his whole career. From his investiture speech in 1954, when he had refused to consider Communist votes as counting towards his majority, to his association with the rebels of 1968, to his present support for Mitterrand, Mendès France had apparently sought to prevent the working-class from taking control of national affairs and sought instead to protect the privileges of his own class. For the Communists, whatever appearances might suggest, Mendès France represented, and represents, the continuity of the existing social system. For them, he was a typical member of the Radical party (although there were many Radicals who regarded him, both by his character and by his attempts to regiment that undisciplined organization, as "an enemy and a danger").

One problem which the career and personality of Mendès France poses is whether, in fact, he was a good politician. Those who are critical of him note to what extent he has often chosen a lonely position, and have suggested that he fixed such a position because it gave him a certain sense of his own superiority. Like the shy man who backs into the limelight, Mendès France, according to this interpretation, is the modest man who knows that he is all alone in being right. This is probably unfair, but there may be some significance in the fact that Mendès France was always best advised by René Elvès, a politician with whom he had had differences in the past. He was supposedly jealous, therefore, of what had once been called the Plevin Plan. Jean Monnet did not have a high opinion of Mendès France's abilities, and his chief preoccupation at that time was to keep the Americans convinced of Europe's ability to resist Soviet Russia. The American diplomat David Bruce had an almost fanatical devotion to the treaty and was determined to push it. As Lacouture explains, while



Pierre Mendès France (1971: photographed by Leon Herschtritt).







calling for the complete file on Marana, Ernie.

With the aid of this subversive figure, Calvino is able to maintain his scheme of alternations for another dozen chapters, though not without developing the conspiracy theory well past the point of grandiloquence — international organizations — the Reader (Ludmilla), and the like. Marana's primary contact, however, is the perfectly straightforward "famous Irish writer Silas Flannery". (Calvino has conceded to enquirers that the works of Flann O'Brien, along with Borges, Nabokov and, interestingly, Boris Vian, come closest to the spirit of invention generated by this book.) Marana's dealings with Flannery, though not impressively tortuous when you bear in mind, say, the literary world's labyrinthine strivings to pin down the identity of B. Traven, do tend to suggest the suddenly splurging internationalist perspective Calvino takes up. In particular his activities in the Persian Gulf seem a rather forced way of contriving the obligatory genuflection to the tradition of self-generating stories-within-stories begun by the *Arabian Nights*.

Yet Calvino retains to a remarkable extent his capacity for regenerating interest at the start of each new incipit: one finds, rather to one's surprise, that it is possible for the imagination to make a start on ten new novels in the space of one book (and one always thought that starting was at the best of times, the hardest part). According to Calvino himself, only in a network of lines that entwine, a fragment attributed by Marana to Flannery, pre-dated the present book as the beginning of a story he had in mind to finish. It happens to be about a man who suffers complicated neurotic symptoms brought on by the sound of the telephone — any telephone, since in a sense the universal intrusiveness of the wiring system makes every telephone one's own by, as it were, extension. "Lines that entwine," are they telephone lines or not, are to be obsessive a part of Calvino's psychobiological patterning (see *Invisible Cities* and *On the Difficulty of Reading*). Calvino's critique on him in hopes of a revealing disenchantment.

Well, only a kind of self-swallowing act could satisfactorily conclude a juggling display of this kind, and it must be said that Calvino brings it off in a somewhat laborious way, though covering himself neatly with a pair of final flourishes. It is in a section of the diary of Silas Flannery — which does not rank as one of the numerical chapters — that the book shows signs of wishing at least to examine the state of its own entrails.

It would like to be able to write a book that is only a whole duration, that maintains for its whole duration the potentiality of the beginning, the expectation still not focused on an object. But how could such a book be constructed? Would it break off after the first paragraph? Would the preliminaries be prolonged indefinitely?

Calvino's most devoted admirer, I think, could scarcely answer this last question with a wholehearted "No". To raise the question at all at this late stage in the book is almost to admit, after all, that the preliminaries are indeed still in progress.

Where Calvino does fail, I think, is in his attempt to draw together the interested parties — the Reader (ourselves), the Other Reader (Ludmilla), and the literary Source (Marana-Flannery). Let's say for argument's sake — into a novelistic flow strong enough to match the currents so effortlessly set in motion by each incipit. "For a second-person discourse to become a novel", Calvino writes at one stage, "at least two you's are required, distinct and concomitant, which stand out from the crowd of he's, she's and they's"; but his discourse never does quite "become" a novel in this way. The more urgently he brings together its disparate elements, towards the end, the faster his account seems to fly apart. What seeks to be a consolidation strikes one as more of an elaboration than ever.

The problem is certainly Ludmilla. Bringing her into the foreground of the argument begins to poison those passive "readers" virtues for which she stands: the spirit of empathy, the power of mental synthesis, the willingness to accept creation and participation in it. It is perfectly acceptable, for example, that her sister Lotaria should be writing a thesis on Silas Flannery (particularly as Flannery is suffering from a writer's block which emphasizes the predatory aspects of Lotaria's classifying temperament) but that Ludmilla should meet Flannery seems somewhat objectionable and wrong. I think the Reader, having strayed out on the same narrative plane as Ludmilla (in her capacity as Other Reader), retains the instinctive hope that she will stay alongside him on that same plane. We have many interests in common; and, it is to be hoped, we share the same innocence, movingly described by Calvino at the end of his book, as follows:

For this woman... reading means stripping herself of every purpose, every foregone conclusion, to be ready to catch a voice that makes itself heard when you least expect it, a voice that comes from an unknown source, from somewhere beyond the book, beyond the author, beyond the conventions of writing: from the unsaid, from what the world has not yet said of itself and does not yet have the words to say.

The suspicion is bound to be raised, by the Lotaria within all of us, that Calvino in this book has shifted the focus of the celebration onto the Readers of the world because he has lost faith in writers — most especially the writer he knows best. Certainly I think there is no obvious prospect of his writing a conventional "involving" novel again. But if this book is the product of a block, it is a strangely loquacious article. Possibly it inaugurates a new form — which, were the novel not already hallowed by custom, age and institution, I should be happy to dub the Reader's Digest.

## The sad heart at the carnival

By David Lodge

GILBERT SORRENTINO:  
*Aberration of Starlight*  
211pp. Marion Boyars. £6.95.  
0 7145 2731 9

Gilbert Sorrentino's *Mulligan Stew* (1979), published in Britain by Marion Boyars last year, has bound into it, between the cover and the title page, and printed on blue paper, a clutch of letters. Purporting to come from publishing houses which have rejected the novel, these letters beautifully catch the spectrum of epistolary styles, from the defensive to the rude, with which publishers seek to neutralize the challenge of "experimental" writing. For all I know they are not imitations at all, but the real thing. The blue fore-sides also include a long and enthusiastic report by a publisher's reader evidently "into" postmodernist avant-garde fiction. This again is eerily lifelike, and may be a real document. It gives such a full account of the book that, for critical-taxonomic purposes, it scarcely seems necessary actually to read *Mulligan Stew* at all, its hallmarks are so obviously recognizable: a story about a novelist writing a novel whose chief characters develop an autonomous life of their own, narrated in an exuberant mixture of discursive letters, journals, catechisms, playscripts, etc, with a great deal of ribald humour and literary allusion.

Such "carnivalization" (Mikhail Bakhtin's term) of literary conventions and decorums is characteristic of postmodernist fiction, as Tony Tanner has pointed out. Flann O'Brien's *At Swim Two Birds* was an early example, though a greater Irish writer, the arch-modernist himself, James Joyce, had perhaps already pointed the way with the later episodes of *Ulysses* and with *Finnegans Wake*. Sorrentino is clearly indebted to both these writers.

The carnival spirit is, however, significantly lacking in Gilbert Sorrentino's new novel, and the legacy of Joyce is expended with much more sobriety — even timidity. We seem, indeed, to go back, with *Aberration of Starlight*, to an early phase of modernism. The title refers to the fact that we never perceive the true direction of a star's light because of our own movement in space in relation to it: a metaphor for the modernist insistence on the essentially subjective, unshareable nature of experience, which gave rise to the perspectivism of modern literary narrative, fracturing the "truth" into various partial points of view. The situation Sorrentino treats in this way is a simple one. The paying guests at a Long Island boarding house in the late 1930s include an ageing widower, John McGrath; his son, Billy, a good-looking but repressed Catholic who has been deserted by his husband; and his ten-year-old son Billy; and Tom Thebus, a divorced salesman who is attracted to Marie. We see this situation from the perspective of each of these characters in turn, and are thus able to measure the delusions and self-deceptions of each of them. Billy, desperately resentful of his father's desecration, hero-worships Tom and longs for him to become his step-father, Marie, blossoming again in the warmth of Tom's attentions, entertaining similar hopes, though her religious faith poses obstacles, and her father's deep hostility to Tom causes her pain and embarrassment. Tom, himself, we discover, is a compulsive philanderer whose kindness to Billy is part of his plan for seducing Marie. Thus John McGrath's suspicions are justified, but he himself turns out to be a man deeply disappointed in his own sexual life, and therefore jealously possessive of his daughter.

Although the perspective remains constant in each section devoted to each of these characters, the narrative itself switches between several different types of discourse. Thus the "Billy" section is constituted as follows:

1. An objective, external description in the style of the *nouveau roman*: There is a photograph of the boy that shows him at age ten. He is looking directly into the camera, holding up a letter as if for our inspection, his right hand at her neck, his left underneath her body, supporting the animal's weight.

2. A letter from Billy to a pal: There is a man up here this summer called Tom and he is neat. He drives us mostly and yesterday I sit in the rumble seat with a girl who is up here this summer too.

3. A conversation between Billy and Tom transcribed without any narrative at all, not even speech tags or quotation marks: Is she a good dancer? Mom? Dancer? Your Mommy? Mom? She said you might go dancing with her. At the WigWam? They have a real band there, you know that? Oh, Oh, we just talked about it — maybe, maybe.

4. A catechism, reminiscent of the "Ithaca" episode in *Ulysses*: How did Billy think of Tom Thebus?

As a hero; as a movie-star; as a possible new father; as someone who would maybe go and beat his father up; as a man his mother liked a lot; as someone who made him laugh without even trying to.

5. Another letter, this time to his father: abusive, and perhaps not sent, or even committed to paper.

6. A fantasy in which Billy narrates his desires to himself as a story: a special-delivery telegram came to Monsignor O'Hara from Pope Pius and he has thought the case over and decided that he wants Mom and Tom to get married right away because he knows from special reports what a wonderful lady Mom is and what a good Catholic she has been all these years and also what a fine man Tom is.

7. A fantasy in dialogue form through which Billy creates an idyllic picture of his parents' marriage: "I am really sorry, honey, but I was working so hard and working my fingers to the bone to make plenty of money to buy us all some nice things and also maybe put a down payment on a new Peckard."

"Oh, my darling husband Tony, that is perfectly all right! I have kept this nice Swiss steak nice and warm and juicy and I will make you some mash potatoes and a nice crispy green salad!"

8. A narration of Tom and Marie going out on a date, focalized through Billy's naive consciousness: She and Tom smiled at each other and he looked at his watch again and said that it was time they got going because it was kind of a drive. Dave Warren got up from the steps and the Copan girls told his mother that she looked just beautiful. His grandfather came out on the porch and stood there with his hands in his back pockets and Billy kissed his mother and then looked over at his grandfather but his face was stiff and

9. A montage of childhood impressions, reminiscent of the early pages of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*: Babies sucked their mother's tit-tits? Johnny McNamee said that all ladies had their tit-tits full of milk; like cows. That was the funniest thing he ever heard.

These shifts from one kind of discourse to another are not motivated by any naturalistic explanation, and therefore call attention to the status of the whole fiction as a "text". But they set the reader few obstacles to recuperating a domestic drama of conflicting sexual and emotional needs, of a kind that is familiar from the more *ludicrous* modes of soap opera and women's magazine fiction. The agreeable *frisson* of surprise experienced as one encounters the different discourses in the Billy section is not sustained because the other sections follow almost exactly the same

pattern. When form is foregrounded, it cannot afford to be predictable — as Joyce knew well. And at the level of narrative there is not enough difference between the various perspectives on a single action (eg, Tom and Marie's date) to generate a really striking reversal or irony. Under its superficially experimental wrapping, *Aberration of Starlight* is at heart a simple, even sentimental story of simple, sentimental people, whose modest aspirations and desires are pathetically thwarted by a combination of circumstance and their own timidity.

One could say the same of *Ulysses* — but with three crucially important qualifications. *Ulysses* has in Stephen an artist-intellectual figure whose mind gives access to a larger field of ideas and values than that of the provincial petty-bourgeois milieu in which he moves; it has the Homeric and other mythic parallels which magnify the significance of the most trivial events, and liberates the text from a merely social and historical realism; and it has an inexhaustibly enjoyable game with language, especially in the use of what Bakhtin called "doubly oriented discourse", that is, discourse which is not merely expressive or referential but also uses or refers to another, absent speech act. There is some approximation to this effect in *Mulligan Stew*, but little in *Aberration of Starlight*, which, for the most part, remains suffocatingly trapped within the linguistic worlds of its characters.

In the "Nausicaa" episode of *Ulysses*, for example, Joyce borrows the language of cheap women's magazines and lets it speak Gertrude's experience, with an effect that is at once funny and moving:

No prince charming is her beau ideal to lay a rare and wondrous love at her feet but rather a manly man with a strong quiet face who had not found his ideal, perhaps his hair slightly flecked with grey, and who would understand, take her in his sheltering arms, strain her to him in all the strength of his deep passionate nature and comfort her with a long long kiss. It would be like heaven.

Sorrentino is trying for something very similar in his treatment of Marie's daydreams, but somehow loses the double-orientation effect:

She had blushed and lowered her eyes in sweet surrender to what she thought was this dashing but gentle guy who was perfectly happy just being a crack salesman. And then after he had throatily whispered that now now he knew that he loved him for himself, that he had seen into the bottom of her heart, he had kissed her so hard that she almost fainted in the overpowering manliness of the scent of bay rum and rose oil and tobacco that floated around him.

We don't feel here, I think, as we do in "Nausicaa", that the author is borrowing the debased literary style, and using it, like a ventriloquist, but rather that Marie herself is using it to articulate her hopeless longings. The language seems simply mimetic, rather than stylized; hence we feel almost embarrassment as we read, eavesdropping on another's private, fantasy life. This feeling is intensified when the fantasy is explicitly sexual, as is the case with Tom. The language of off-colour jokes and soft porn seems, again, the natural, mimetic medium for expressing his sexual desires. Expressive it certainly is, but it is also kinetic, to use Stephen Dedalus's word — whereas the aesthetic emotion should be "static": the mind arrested and raised above desire and "loathing". In *Aberration of Starlight* the reader is invited to share the characters' desires and longings as directly, immediately, as in any traditionally realistic text; and since these characters are ultimately of limited human interest, the final effect of the novel is rather lowering to the spirits.

A general phenomenon which I found surprising is the large role played in these tales and conversations by God, and the perfectly natural way the children talk of a being generally reckoned to be either dead or peculiarly detached. Orthodoxly enough, God has created everything. (An amusing piece of back-to-front reasoning serves to account for the diversity of languages: if there were only one language, God wouldn't have felt called on to create China, Japan etc.) But, Eddie objects, some ideas come from

VIVIAN GUSSIN PALEY:  
*Wally's Stories*  
232pp. Harvard University Press. £7.50.  
0 674 94592 1

The plums in this book are the responses of five-year-old kindergarten pupils to stories read to them, the stories they themselves make up and act, and the ensuing discussions. Examples are more potent than precepts. And this is how Vivian Gussin Paley, a tactful and unobtrusive mistress of ceremonies, would have it, and how she has contrived it. She makes one want to be a kindergarten pupil oneself, or failing that a kindergarten teacher.

That on balance children of this age are conservative, even conformist, inclined to keep their fantasies within safe bounds, and favouring orderliness and fairness (whether sponsored by God, fairy or teacher), is no great new discovery. Sober and limiting though these traits may sound, the resulting scripts as recorded here remind us of Wordsworth's tribute to the Sonnet: in them children unlock their hearts, give ease to their wounds and cheer themselves up. They spin reassuring explanations of what happens around them, in the manner of the ancient myth-makers accounting for why winter comes and how spring is sure to return. Logic was a necessary ingredient in those myths, and so it is in these children's stories and debates. A simple example of fantasy stiffened by rationality comes up early in the book, when Wally, a black boy and *primus inter pares* in the classroom, reduces little Fred to tears by knocking down his tower. "I'm a dinosaur. I'm smashing the city", Wally justifies himself. Will anyone, Fred or him, self together and tell Wally that he should have asked permission first. Wally replies, in the spirit of the shaggy dog story: "Dinosaurs don't ask". Undeniable truth.

Reasonableness in children can look like wit, irony, scepticism, hard-headedness and other fruits of long and varied experience. Or like prototypical forms of adult jokes. Does Fred believe that Wally can really change into a mother lion? "Only if he practises very hard." More sophisticated or sophisticated-seeming is the conversation about checkers. Eddie, who is losing, wonders why God invented the game in such a way that one can't move backwards. It was God who invented it, he insists: "because a magician would trick you". (By continually changing the rules, as in his weaker moments Eddie would like to do? Or arranging it so that you could never win?) Despite advice, his classmate Warren persists in moving on the wrong spaces — because, Eddie opines, Warren is Chinese. Seeing an opening for a little instruction, Mrs Paley expresses doubt that Chinese people play checkers in a different way. Eddie retorts: "What's the use of being Chinese if you don't do things different?" Again and again imagination and plain logic, fantasy and realism, join forces to achieve effects asgiaciously like those of creative genius.

Or, to put it perhaps more moderately, like those of the professional philosopher: reviewing Gareth B. Matthews's *Philosophy and the Young Child* (FLS, May 8), Don Locke remarks that the philosopher's questions and even his answers are often much the same as the child's, and (though I wonder about that last word) that "philosophy itself can be seen as institutionalized naivety".

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## Kindergarten thoughts

By D. J. Enright

your mother and father. "After God puts it into their mind", says Wally, an expert theologian who has been in touch with God ("He talks very soft"). When teacher asks slyly whether God is a magician, they cry out unanimously against such an absurd idea. For them, Mrs Paley tells us, God is sensible, desires harmony, and represents order and equity. Fairies are associated with pleasant surprises and, like God, can be trusted. Magicians cause mischief, are more like people, "and must be viewed cautiously". Witches are thought to be fairies who have gone to the bad, though one little girl surmises that after 600 years (presumably of good behaviour) a witch can turn back into a fairy. It will be seen that this hierarchy of Magical Beings takes care of most eventualities in life.

An elaborate discussion begins with God dispatching Jonah into the whale and then diverges into the question of

George Washington in the affair of the cherry tree, you may then make president of the United States. It is probably less priggishness than the ever-present urge to make good (practical sense of things that causes Wally to defend corporal punishment on the grounds that, when it descends on you, "you know your answer is wrong so you try to think of the right answer"). At this juncture the discussion moves from the sublime to the self-interested. Mrs Paley remarks that in her class they try to behave well even though she never spansks them. "Maybe you'll give us candy if we're good", Lisa suggests hopefully. But, Mrs Paley says, she never hands out candy. "You might change your mind", says Lisa.

Fortunately for our *amour propre*, Mrs Paley's pupils (who were beginning to resemble the alarming alien-spawned youngsters of science fiction)

superhero story was the one genre in which she could not tell the identity of the author, all individuality having been masked, and also that superheroes were never invoked when real problems and events came under serious discussion. They are not "magic", which is "invisible" but "alive", so much as "pretend", and evidently their place in the hierarchy of powers is rather near the bottom.

Mrs Paley doesn't say much about the development of her pupils in the course of the kindergarten year. Perhaps she feels it would be unbecomingly in her. And perhaps it would have detracted from the charm her book has for the secular reader. But she counterpoints her class's fondness for "The Tinker Box" with the scorn shown by Eddie's nine-year-old brother for the idea that a soldier would spend his newly gained money on such frivolities as candy and toys. Eddie defends the story by suggesting that some soldiers might like candy. (Earlier on, the disappearance of seeds from the classroom was attributed to robbers, and when the teacher said that if she were a robber she would rather take the record-player, Eddie commented: "Not if you wanted to plant seeds.") Noticing his elder brother's condescending smile, Eddie adds that the soldier might be thinking of giving the candy "to some children".

One effect of Mrs Paley's mild educative intervention manifests itself indirectly when some of the class protest against "Hänsel and Gretel" — "it's too scary" — whereas Eddie clamours to have it read. Lisa reminds him that we have a rule not to make people feel bad, and he accepts this with a docility which one thought had long vanished from the world's nurseries: "Okay, I'll tell my mother to read it to me. She likes it too." As direct evidence of growing maturity (an ambiguous word in this context), of at least one sad but no doubt necessary lesson learnt, the following will suffice: the children have progressed from the belief that foxes eat bunnies because bunnies steal their apples to the knowledge that foxes eat bunnies because they like eating bunnies.

Apocryphal photographs helping grown-ups to remember when they were young, Wally said in one of his wisest moments: "You can never take a picture of thinking". In a book exceptionally modest in manner and unusually substantial in matter, Mrs Paley has given a vivid and credible picture of how five-year-olds think. An entertaining picture, too, and a strangely inspiring one. She even lulls the fears aroused by the name of the institution in which she works: the Laboratory Schools of the University of Chicago.

## Play-back

By Timothy d'Arch Smith

BEN TRAVERS:  
*94 Declared Cricket Reminiscences*  
75pp. Elm Tree Books. £5.95.  
0 241 10591 9

One Saturday, last year, the BBC cricket commentators invited Ben Travers to broadcast his cricketing reminiscences in the lunch interval of a Test Match. He left: the normally talkative team speechless for thirty minutes, unprompted but for a glass of champagne, he raised over his eighty-two years of cricket watching. This book was commissioned as a result.

As a boy of nine, Travers saw Grace open the batting for England in the Oval Test of 1896. He made only 24 in this low-scoring match, but Travers later watched him make a century in partnership with Ranji, despite a little *fracture* concerning a possible catch at short-leg when he was in his twenties. He saw Jessop's match-winning and

unbelievably fast century, again at the Oval, in 1902, he saw Bradman's debut in first-class cricket, but he considers Hobbs's 49 on a Melbourne cricket field in the 1928-29 Test series to be the finest innings he ever saw. That is true cricketing connoisseurship, to be able to look at an innings in the context of the match, both while it is in progress and after the event.

Cricket books can be deadly dull. Page after page has been wasted trying to put this beautiful and dangerous game on to paper, but this is not one of them. There are some delightful vignettes: MacLaren, hurrying away from him the ball he has just caught at slip as if it smelled; an Australian female enthusiast devouring curry and shouting "Good on yer, Lawry" between mouthfuls (it is actually a revelation that Lawry had a fan at all); Hammond spending the lunch interval with Travers, borrowing a field glasses from him; the "Ladies' Enclosure at Sydney" but my favourite is R.C. Robertson-Glasgow's opinion of an unproductive morning bowling at Hobbs and Sandham. Travers asked him how he had got on: "It's like trying to bowl to God on concrete," he replied.



how many Christmas trees God gets. "Infinity", says Eddie, perhaps not unpreparedly since it was he who raised the point. Are there decorations on the trees? Yes, says Wally, invisible ones, which God can see because He is invisible too. Eddie comes up with the theory (obviously one is required) that 353 years ago everyone could see God: "He was young so He could stay down on Earth". Now He is old and floats up in the sky, out of our sight. God hears one's wishes, but the children agree that you shouldn't make too many or God (in this case resembling fairies) will grow tired of listening to them. ("Not grateful," by the way, is taken to mean "not great.") Naturally God features prominently in matters concerning birth and death. He makes babies out of the blood and bones of the dead — rather as vapour rises into the sky and reappears as water. The world, says Mrs Paley with quiet humour, is a giant recycling plant: with heaven as the storage area and God as the distribution manager.

The teacher's role, as she sees it, is to question gently, to encourage connections in place of non sequiturs, occasionally to instill a modicum of things-as-they-are or insert a tidbit of information or advice. Not, that is, to wear the children away from imagination, but to Warren persists in moving on the wrong spaces — because, Eddie opines, Warren is Chinese. Seeing an opening for a little instruction, Mrs Paley expresses doubt that Chinese people play checkers in a different way. Eddie retorts: "What's the use of being Chinese if you don't do things different?" Again and again imagination and plain logic, fantasy and realism, join forces to achieve effects asgiaciously like those of creative genius.

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An even shorter term for this species of pedagogy — "Teach these boys and girls nothing but Facts. Facts alone are wanted in life" — is G. G. Heyder. And yet as a businessman Giddind would have admired some of the attitudes revealed here. In a sustained exchange on the "tooth fairy", evidently a big thing in those parts, the children discuss the rights and wrongs of passing

## Criminal proceedings

By T. J. Binyon

EMMA LATHEN:  
*Going for Gold*  
251pp. Gollancz. £5.95.  
0 575 02902 1

John Putnam Thatcher is at the Lake Placid Winter Olympics, where the Sloan Quaranty Trust has a monopoly of banking services, which turns out to be not quite the next best thing to coffee money when did traveller's cheques start flooding in. And then a sniper puts a ski jumper out of the event with a bullet. This is very much the typical Emma Lathen mixture, but who would have it otherwise? Childlike intelligence and witty entertainment which knows precisely what it's

aiming at and hits its target in the middle every time. One minor quibble: surely all duathlon courses are different, since there can't be a world record for the event?

GERALD HAMMOND:  
*The Revenge Game*  
191pp. Macmillan. £5.50.  
0 333 31058 6

Scots gunsmith Keith Calder, now a reformed character, leading a quiet family life, is lured into violent action when, following an attempt to burn down his shop, his wife is attacked and nearly killed. Gerald Hammond's third novel set in the Lowland Scots town of Newton Lander is every bit as good as the two earlier ones, well written and full of life, with a pleasantly rebellious individual hero who once again takes on the system and wins.



# The effusions of Anny

By Claire Tomalin

WINIFRED GERIN:  
Anne Thackeray Ritchie  
A Biography  
310pp. Oxford University Press. £12.50.  
0 19 812664 6.

What English writer was teased by Thackeray and Virginia Woolf, knew them both intimately, and was afraid of neither?

The answer is Anny Thackeray, the novelist and biographer whose graceful, impressionistic books were so popular a hundred years ago; whose memoirs bring so many of the great Victorians to life before our eyes: Charlotte Brontë in her "little *barège* dress with a pattern of faint green moss, she enters in mittens, in silence, in seriousness," or "Fanny" or "Pussy" or "Great fat deedle-deedle" - the family was given to affectionate names into the waves. Anny felt terror and resentment but did not speak of it even to her father. A certain determined sweetness of outlook seems to have been formed in her; in all her writing she looks on the bright side, but with a shadowing of nostalgia. There were to be no more days of singing, dancing and picking daisies and clover with pretty Mama in Brunswick Square (they had settled in Bloomsbury for a time). Soon Isabella threw herself into the water, from a boat on which the family was travelling to Cork.

Her life was saved (such was the buoyancy of Victorian dress); but Thackeray thought it necessary to keep her apart from the children and herself, and she lived in private care until her death, long after his, in 1894. The strain of madness appeared again in her first grandchild, Laura, daughter of Leslie Stephen and Minny; and although Anny was in no way insane, she was richly eccentric, volatile, extravagant and subject to what was probably a thyroid disorder.

And here is Hampstead:

As for Church Row, as most people know, it is an avenue of Dutch red-faced houses, leading demurely to the old church tower, that stands guarding its graves in the flowery churchyard. As we came up the quiet place, the sweet windy drone of the organ swelled across the blossoms of the spring, which were lighting up every shabby corner and hillside garden. Through this pleasant confusion of past and present, of spring-time scattering blossoms upon the graves, of old ivy walls and iron bars imprisoning past memories, with fragrant fumes of lilac and of elder, one could picture to oneself, as in a waking dream, two figures advancing from the corner house with the ivy walls - distinct, sedate - passing under the old doorway. I could almost see the lady, carefully dressed in many fine muslin folds and filled with hoop skirts, indeed, but slight and graceful in her quick advance; with blue eyes, with delicate sharp features, and a dazzling skin.

This is the writing of a woman who deserves to be remembered; and now Winifred Gerin has reminded us of her with a biography so rich in interest and so perfectly matched to it that it must be welcomed not only as the crowning work of a distinguished career (which ended, sadly, with Mrs

Gerin's death last week), but as the first complete study for the delightful small volume published in Dublin in 1951. *Thackeray's Daughter* by Hester Thackeray Fuller and Violet Hammersley, with an introduction by Desmond MacCarthy, is not that.

Anny Thackeray was the daughter of a troubled home. Her father, the great novelist, met a young Irish girl, Isabella Shawe, in Paris in 1835 and married her, imprudently, the next year; Anny was born in 1837. Two little sisters followed in quick succession, the second dying at eight months, the third (Minny, who was to become the first wife of Leslie Stephen) precipitating a depressive illness in her mother. Isabella's behaviour became alarming; walking on the beach at Margate, she tried to push her precocious three-year-old Anny (or "Fanny" or "Pussy" or "Great fat deedle-deedle") - the family was given to affectionate names into the waves. Anny felt terror and resentment but did not speak of it even to her father. A certain determined sweetness of outlook seems to have been formed in her; in all her writing she looks on the bright side, but with a shadowing of nostalgia. There were to be no more days of singing, dancing and picking daisies and clover with pretty Mama in Brunswick Square (they had settled in Bloomsbury for a time). Soon Isabella threw herself into the water, from a boat on which the family was travelling to Cork.

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This may have played its part in giving her a characteristic elated energy that allowed her both to organize her own career as a well-paid professional writer and to ignore or leap over some of the dictates laid down for ladies. It was not only an overactive thyroid that helped. Thackeray's upbringing of his daughters was extraordinary for its time; they lived now in France, now in England, sometimes travelling alone, and welcomed into adult social gatherings. They seem also to have been allowed a rare degree of intellectual liberty; if their minds were undisciplined (Leslie Stephen longed, much later, for Anny's genius to be "just a little combed up") they were not constrained by useless school rules or piety; they were "probably unique in their time and circle - as girls - for the freedom they had enjoyed" - this is Mrs Gerin's phrase.

From an early age Anny was her father's closest companion, unrivalled by mother or stepmother. She idolized him, and if she felt the strains of his difficult life she was discomfited upon this. He rebuffed her - "Great fat deedle-deedle" became simply "Fat" - and he taught her to be his secretary; he forbade her to write stories or think of marriage before she had had time to read the classics and learn the ways of the world; he made her his ally against his own mother's gloomy religious creed, and took her and Minny to Rome and Germany and Brussels. They were used to knowing the famous, the Brownings, the Carlyles, Landseer, Charles Dickens and his family; Minny innocently wished her father would write as well as the author of *Nickelby*.

At eighteen Anny discovered Fanny Burney's journal and decided to emulate her; what has survived of the diary is nowhere as fine as Miss Burney's rapturous reports, but there are some sharp touches:

Wednesday. I had an invitation from Mrs. Thomson. Harkney, but Papa could not take me, having a public dinner to attend at which he made the most beautiful, impromptu speech as I have good reason to know, as he delivered it to me from his bed the day before.

"Monday" - on being introduced to the famous Caroline Norton -

O! what a handsome woman she is. She said, shaking her head: "I have often heard about you. How is your sister? Does she help you to dress and do your hair? I always used to dress my sister's hair when I was a girl." I don't think she cared immensely as she turned away before I could answer.

When Anny was 26, her father died suddenly, followed a year later by his mother. The girls inherited and sold his "palazzo", the splendid house just built at 2, Palace Green, and his copyrights were well sold too; his daughters were not to be poor. His extravagant disposition, and a touch of his genius were Anny's further inheritance. She had already published a novel, *The Story of Elizabeth*, a girl's love story set in Paris and the English seaside: the tale is ordinary, but the language is original, with flashes of life and humour when she describes a place and suits it to a mood. Thackeray's publishers took her on enthusiastically.

The sisters had many friends to comfort them. They went to stay near Mrs. Cameron and the Tennysons on the Isle of Wight, where "everybody is either a genius, or a poet, or a painter or peculiar in some way, poor Miss Stephen says there is *no* common place!" Then, after a comfortable visit to the Trollopes, they settled in London, Minny keeping house, Anny writing and entertaining. Presently they were taking in the orphaned babies of a cousin in India; and Miss Stephen's brother proposed to Minny. Happiness was re-established; Minny, with a two-year-old daughter of her own, told her sister, "O Anny, how one does like one's own child!"

But Minny was struck down, dying suddenly in mid-pregnancy, and leaving a widow who would never, even in the blessing of a second marriage to the widowed Mrs. Duckworth, lose the habit of self-pity. Anny's story takes a curious leap from its distant, early Victorian brightness into the more murky and familiar territory of the Duckworths and the Stephens. It is quite a painful jolt to realize that when Virginia Stephen complains to Lytton Strachey "O how these old women spoil my life", one of the old women in question is kind, eager, scatterbrained Anny who took in everyone's babies and drove her own open across the page with a wonderful impressionistic vigour which must have made its mark on Virginia's own style.

The 1870s saw Anny established as a writer. Her best-known novel, *Old Kensington*, appeared, very much her own in its glancing, evocative descriptions, but bearing clear traces of her father's penchant for drawing selfish, irresistible women. Her next book was a study of the painter Angelica Kauffman; she may have felt some affinity with her as she approached a middle age of professional dedication, but without any central supporting love.

And then, to the indignant horror of her bereaved brother-in-law, particularly, Anny kicked up her heels and was found kissing in the drawing-room at Hyde Park Gate.

Between 1877 and 1881 three eminent Victorian women took it into their heads to marry men young enough to be their sons. Anny was the only one followed by George Eliot and Baroness Burdett-Coutts. Of the three, Anny appears to have chosen best; she married her second cousin, fresh out of Eton and Cambridge. They had known one another for years, and it was generally agreed that he was exceptionally mature and responsible. Beyond this it is hard to discover very devoted himself to his labours at the India Office from the time of his marriage (he was twenty-three, Anny forty) to his premature death in 1882; but clearly he was a hard worker and became a devoted father.

During the first ten years of the marriage Anny produced a son and a daughter - and, in addition, her best work: the little study of *Madame de Sévigné*, the *Book of Sybils* with its enchanting portraits of the literary dynasties of an earlier generation, and *Mrs Dymond*, which is undoubtedly, as Mrs Gerin says, her finest novel.



A charcoal portrait of Lady Ritchie by John Singer Sargent, 1914.

*Mrs Dymond* is a book that must be taken on its own terms, as the vision of an author who is sharply responsive to social types and finely observant to landscape - here of the Lake District and Paris and its *banlieue*. What she lacks is any real engagement with the inner life of her characters: they are all children, or rather they are all judged, by the moral standards of the nursery. Susanna Dymond, like Dorothea in *Middlemarch* (written over a decade earlier) marries a much older man because she is an idealizing innocent. Susanna's concept of marriage extends little further than doing her mother good - here she resembles Gwendolen Harleth too - and she has no notion of the relation between money and sex (and so hardly understands the opprobrium she earns). This would not matter if the author did not appear to share her innocence; where George Eliot shows in cruelly believable detail the effect of this sort of naïveté, Anny Thackeray Ritchie gives a child's eye view of the "happiness" of Susanna with the good old grandfatherly Colborne. Dymond whose daughter she bears. It is what Virginia Woolf described as her "childlike candour of mind which had so much rather praise and exult than weigh and ponder."

*Mrs Dymond* is undoubtedly flavoured a little too sweetly; but with the sweetness goes a true gentleness and a genuinely sparkling and engaging manner, so that the story does interest and touch the reader. It was Mrs Ritchie's last novel, although Virginia Woolf speaks in her diary of visiting her in her old age when she put her hand down I remember, into a bag or box standing beside the fire, and said she had a novel, three-quarters written - but couldn't finish it.

Instead there were her famous reminiscences and introductions to her father's works. A tremor in the marriage may also have had its silent effect on her imagination: Mrs Gerin says that after the death of Lionel Tennyson in 1886, Richmond was bewitched by his beautiful widow; but this passed, and the story of the unhappiness survives only in family talk. Still, Anny could be a trial, with her restlessness, her famous friends, her impulsiveness and her extravagance.

She lived on, past the birth of granddaughters and the death of Richmond, losing friends and finding new ones such as Swinburne, Henry James and Barrie; she became a grand, living memorial to the Eminent Victorians, she lived even to welcome Lytton Strachey's book in the last year of her life. At her death, in 1919, Virginia Woolf wrote a tribute to the *Times*

*Literary Supplement*. Some months later she published a decidedly satirical portrait of Anny as "Mrs Hilbery" in her novel *Night and Day*; it annoyed the Ritchie family but is the best thing in the book culminating in a wonderful conversation in which Mrs Hilbery tries to dissuade her daughter from living with a man without benefit of marriage, and describing her own marriage as an ocean voyage:

"Who knows," exclaimed Mrs Hilbery, continuing her reveries, "where we are bound for, or why, or who has sent us, or what we shall find - who knows anything, except that love is our faith - love -" she crooned. "And you won't think those ugly thoughts again, will you, Katharine?"

There was, evidently, something to mock as well as much to revere in Anny Thackeray; even her great friend and fellow-writer Mrs Oliphant remarked,

She was always more effusive than myself, delightfully flattering, appreciating. I used to say that if you wanted the moon very much, she would eagerly, and for a moment quite seriously, think how she could help to get it for you, scolding the bounds of the possible.

She was famous for arriving early, or late, or inviting too many people when there was no food; and ruthless in imposing her will, as when she had the whiskers on her father's bust in Westminster Abbey chiselled down to give it a better appearance. But, however amusing her character, she is not to be dismissed as a merely fantastical woman. Her kindness was genuine and practical, especially to children. Many friends loved her devotedly: the Sargent drawing, with its lovely smile from a lopsided face, was commissioned by her admirers. And, whatever her working methods - Virginia Woolf describes her polishing the backs of her books with a duster between phrases, a habit that may not seem very strange to women writers of the present generation - she was productive and professional. She left the record of an extraordinary life and an unusual mind for us to enjoy. Mrs Gerin's book, rather in the way of Robert Martin's biography of Tennyson last year, is a restorative rather than a cutting-down-to-size study; the dead are given their stature, reclaimed warmly for our sympathy and fellow-feeling. And, although it may leave a couple of questions hanging in the air, chiefly about Anny's reactions to the madness in the family and her own bouts of melancholy, it is a fair and kindly view, and would have commended itself to the subject herself.

## POLITICS

# What makes Tories tick?

By J. R. Vincent

PHILIP NORTON and  
ARTHUR AUGHEY:  
*Conservatives and Conservatism*  
334pp. Temple Smith. £12.50 (paper-  
back, £5.95).  
0 85117 211 3

There is a supposed Conservative intellectual ascendancy. This means that for the first time in years there has been a run of Conservative books, and that there are more Conservative titles getting published than Labour ones. True, but only part of the truth. Enter your local "alternative" bookshop, and see the hard bibliographic facts. The sum of titles connected with the parliamentary orthodoxies is but a tiny rivulet compared with the Mississippi of antinomian thought. Still, there has been a small Conservative explosion, rather as there has been a small explosion about the misuse of power in the Third World, and the next fashion in political publishing takes shape. It is a good time to take stock of the present state of knowledge and opinion about English Conservatism. Now, for the first time, everything about the subject is brought together within a single cover.

The authors are both Lecturers in Politics. One is an active Conservative (Norton), the other not. Their book, the best sort of primer, will annoy nobody. They come across as good-tempered and fair men. Their work will be greatly in demand by students new to the subject. Old hands will turn to it as a quick way of finding the required lecture fodder. The exposition is graceful and free from social science English. On the other hand, the authors appear chiefly as umpires between the Commen's thoughts, and say little in their own right. They present essential information neatly, they quote shrewdly, and they use their good judgment to challenge over-simplifications. On a few issues, such as the power of the party leader, they locate new middle ground between opposed points of view. For the relative beginner, here is all you ever wanted to know about the theory and practice of English Conservatism.

The authors emerge unscathed from their discussion of Tory principles. They reject equally the Scylla of reductionism and the Charybdis of an idealized party creed. The reductionist view that the only principle of Conservatism is that there should be a Conservative government is inadequate and not historically true. On the other hand, the ritual ideology of sin, scepticism, tradition, common sense, intimations, and other such invocations are really only for use by the party's (usually borrowed) attendant intellectuals, and by politicians when trying to behave like intellectuals. Unless and until someone supplies a realistic account of Conservative ideology as it actually is, that is as a folk ideology rather than an intellectual concoction, it is right to be intolerantly negative about the idea that there is such a

thing as Conservatism. (The authors are very clear, by the way, that a neo-liberal passion for market economics is not Conservatism. Good.)

The higher Conservative theory, as found in books, is painfully unreal. The more Olympian its tone, as in Oakeshott, the less it can possibly entail party preferences. It is nearly always (the exception is Salisbury), morality without sociology; whereas progressive theory is sociology divorced from morality and sense of human nature. Pursue intimations how you will, they must lead into sociological contexts. And in a country whose cultural and governmental traditions are so overwhelmingly those of secular progressivism, it is probably unwise for Conservatives to turn to tradition for comfort. One day we may know what real Conservatives really think. At present we only know what they think they ought to think.

Why does Conservative thought reject a structured sociology, as if it were like shooting a fox? Partly because its function is not cognitive but political: to unify as many people as possible. Partly because of not knowing what to say about capitalism, of which it is ashamed. The main feature of modern society fails to fit into Conservative thought, not too surprisingly since the moral case against capitalism was first developed by men of the right. Even Burke's tirades against the Jacobins may be read as a premature attack on the capitalist denial of moral order; at least he is not quite as much a *Telegraph* intellectual as the latter would like to think. The real beliefs of Conservatives, if they exist, cannot be found in formal texts and are extremely difficult to articulate.

The lack of a sociology of Conservatism matters the more, since the interesting questions about it are indeed sociological. Why do those with anything to lose, turn to the Conservatives rather than to the Liberals? Why do those with much to lose, do less than nothing about it? Why are the urban rich in the twentieth century so uninterested in building the kind of moral order built by the rural rich in the nineteenth century? Why do the hereditary intelligentsia regard voting Conservative as a form of deviant behaviour, even when they practise it? Why is Labour regarded by Conservatives as the party of the workers when skilled workers, in 1979, were evenly divided on the point? Why has Anglicanism produced nothing like Christian Democracy, except perhaps under Baldwin? It will be some time before answers to such questions find their way into the textbooks.

The neo-liberals in their turn fall down on sociology. They offer us an economics of entrepreneurship, but have nothing to say on where the entrepreneurs will come from. Nor has anyone else. Thatcherism assumed that enterprise was the one factor of production that did not need worrying about: people just liked making money. Nothing could be further from the truth. Making money is a deviant activity, and we know nothing about why some people do it and others do not. When did the last Eng Lit graduate become

an entrepreneur? Why do University Careers Services have no column in their tables for self-made men? Is Sir I. Gilmour scouring the ends of the earth for the counterparts of the refugees and aliens who have done so much to make the modern British economy? Was Werner Sombart right about the Jews? (Yes, at periods when Jews have had a fair chance.) The neo-liberals are right about markets but blind about England; and content to be so, though the success or failure of their regime rests on their incuriosity.

The third chapter, giving a short history of the party, is inevitably slightly banal. Chapter 4, on electoral support, reconsiders the old paradox of the Tory workingman - script by Alf Garnett, statistics by Ivor Crewe. The paradox has changed with the years. We used to ask why the poor voted for the right. Now the paradox is explained: it is why the Conservative Party does not move to the right to keep in line with the mass of voters of all parties. We cannot of course know the answer. Modern facilities for propagating cliché are probably just beginning to turn Alf Garnett into a querulous opponent of apartheid, telephone-tapping, and conditions in El Salvador. Conservative managers have their most difficult task in balancing overt, on-the-doorstep, moral, patriotic, reactionary sentiment, which is what the political scientists pick up on their scales, against the impalpable mist of liberalism.

On electoral support, not much seems to have happened since Blondel drew the basic diagrams. On party organization, not much has happened since Robert Mackenzie (although the party conference of 4,500 can now be squeezed in at only two resorts, Blackpool and Brighton). Conferences are still not as important as valets, as in Balfour's dictum. The party is far richer than most people think, for its national revenue of £2 million one must add £4½ million received each year locally. The authors give useful, updated accounts of backwaters like the Advisory Committee on Policy, the Conservative Research Department, and the Conservative Centre. Notably lacking is comment on constituency parties, chairmen, agents, and area chairmen. Heath's fall in 1974, the most disastrous machine to mobilize the strong constituency support in its favour is not explained. Heath's reign is fairly portrayed in its good and bad points. He at least tried seriously, where Wilson had only tried frivolously, to modernize Britain. On the other hand, his ideal of managerial collectivism left little need for a Tory party, or indeed for parties at all. On the premiership, the authors point to a central weakness: there is no White House, no body of powerful and clever men who depend personally on the premier. Central Office and the Cabinet Office are bureaucracies loyal essentially to themselves. We have a system of highly centralized power which is very difficult for strong prime ministers to use assertively without it looking as though they had simply fallen into the hands of the wrong people.

## Fifty years on...

In the TLS of July 9, 1931, E. A. Peers reviewed A. Rovira i Virgili's *Cataluña's República*, published by the *Llibreria Catalònia* at five pesetas:

The literature of the Spanish Republic has begun. Only a few weeks after the revolution there appeared two books (one by Señor Nicolau d'Oliver, the Minister of Economy, the other by Don Rafael Sánchez Guerra, secretary to the President) which had been written during the last days of the old regime and foretold its fall. But here we have a discussion of what will probably be the most immediate and serious question of the new Cortes - the relations between Catalonia and the central Spanish Government - written since the overthrow of the monarchy.

Realizing, no doubt, that whatever he may write during this transition period can of itself have only an ephemeral existence, Señor Rovira

Virgili has acutely contrived to give his book a permanent value by the inclusion in it of a number of important documents which throw much light on his subject and especially upon the general question of Spanish Federalism. Few who are not professed students of Spanish politics know that the federal solution of Catalonia's difficulties goes back nearly fifty years, to the days of the First Republic. We can now, for the first time, read in convenient form the text of the Federal Constitution of the Spanish Republic proposed in 1873, which divided the "Spanish nation" into seventeen States - including Cuba and Porto Rico - and defined those very relations between Madrid and the local capitals which just now are the subject of so much debate. Ten years later the Assembly of the Federal Catalan Party drew up a programme which formulated the claims which it would make for Catalo-

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# Soldiers and statesmen

By Brian Bond

JOHN GOOCH:

The Prospect of War  
Studies in British Defence Policy 1847-1942

163pp. Cass. £11.  
0 7146 3128 0

Twenty years ago, researching into later Victorian and Edwardian military history was a rather lonely occupation and, apart from a re-assessment of the Cardwell reforms, there was not much sense of a scholarly debate. Since then, however, it has become quite a popular area of study and several younger scholars have thoroughly explored particular aspects of military reform and reorganization. Prominent among them is John Gooch, thanks mainly to his book *The Plans of War* (1974), which traced the development of the general staff from its origins to the end of the First World War, but also to several significant journals published by him in books and articles. *The Prospect of War* brings together six of these, originally published between 1968 and 1977, together with two new essays. One of the latter, a survey of invasion threats and their impact on plans for home defence, covers the century from the 1840s, when steam-power had supposedly "bridged the Channel" for French invasion, via the perennial project for a Channel tunnel (1882, 1919, 1981?) to the warning of the German threat after 1940. But apart from this chapter, the dates in Gooch's sub-title are misleading because all the other essays are concerned with the period 1900-18.

Two themes especially have interested him in this shorter period and give this collection a fair degree of coherence and sense of unity. The major theme is the transition in foreign policy and strategy from preoccupation with the defence of a scattered empire in an era of naval dominance and so-called "splendid isolation", to the acceptance of a Continental commitment against Germany with its implications of political obligation and an unprecedented military effort. Within this framework, Gooch is fascinated by the minor theme of the early evolution of the bureaucracy for decision-making in defence (what another pioneer in this field, Franklin A. Johnson, has termed "defence by committee") and particularly the soldiers' part in it.

He is a self-proclaimed "gradualist" in the sense that close acquaintance with the sources has convinced him that there was no sudden, dramatic swing away from empire and towards the Continent in 1905-6, but rather a steady shift in priorities from the mid 1890s to 1910. Among the leading military *drummers* in this development were Lord Ardgah, Grier, Ewart, Lytton, Nicholson, Robertson and Wilson. Most of these names will be unfamiliar to all but a few specialists, so it is a pity that more biographical information is not given about them here, or, better still, an essay on the social and professional background of the military élite who formed the General Staff. Nevertheless, this collection provides a salutary corrective, in the author's sympathetic treatment of the service officers' role in the formulation of defence policy, to the popular stereotype of inept, self-seeking incompetents as immortalized in *Oh, What A Lovely War*, but also purveyed more insidiously by certain scholars who are taken to task in the references. Gooch's judgment, which is surely as true of Whitcomb's warriors today as in 1906, is that "the soldiers who grappled with these problems were not malign, blinkered, nor unduly xenophobic; they were honest, and often extremely able men struggling as best they might with the limited resources at their command to provide their country with security, not just in present circumstances but in future ones."

In view of Britain's naval supremacy, the persisting fear of a "Bolt from the Blue", as the threat of seaborne invasion was dramatically called before the advent of air-power, is surprising and full of ironies. In the 1840s, even the Duke of Wellington, not normally regarded as a pacifist, warned that Britain was vulnerable to invasion anywhere, but under the guns of Dover Castle, yet

it is doubtful if the French, then, or later, had any serious plans for making the attempt. In the aftermath of Prussia's defeat of France in 1870, Sir George Chesney initiated a spate of invasion fiction with his best-selling story *The Battle of Dorking*, which was truly futuristic in that the imagined enemy had virtually no navy. A new wave of invasion literature after 1900, such as Erskine Childers' *The Riddle of the Sands*, could at least point to a potential threat in the expanding German fleet, but in fact German naval planners were never sanguine about the prospects of full-scale invasion as distinct from limited raids. The real point of much alarmist fiction (as in contemporary accounts of "The Third World War"), was to alert the nation to the need for greater military preparedness, whether in the form of the Volunteer Movement or of some kind of national service.

Whether the mass readership of this invasion literature took it seriously may be doubted. In 1895 Alfred Harmsworth ran a luridly advertised newspaper serial, including references to the fate of local dignitaries, entitled "The Siege of Portsmouth", but he still failed in his bid to win a Parliamentary seat in that constituency. The campaign for compulsory military training gained impetus from the deficiencies exposed by the Boer War, and indirectly did some good in encouraging physical fitness and basic military skills, but its emphasis on home defence was not conducive to a dispassionate reappraisal of the Army's priorities. Indeed, during the whole "Bolt from the Blue" controversy non-navalists failed to grasp, or anyway to admit, that if the Royal Navy completely lost control of the sea approaches it would be easier for an opponent to starve Britain into surrender than to attempt a hazardous invasion.

Even after Russia's defeat by Japan in 1904-5, the former's threat to Afghanistan continued to obsess the powerful India lobby. The waning of this issue is examined through the brief term of Sir George Clarke as the first secretary of the Committee of Imperial Defence from 1904 to 1907. Clarke was a rare type indeed; a scientific soldier who was also a navalist in outlook and yet was firmly orientated towards Europe. He regarded Simla's obsession with Afghanistan as puerile and sought to convince Kitchener that to maintain 155,000 British troops in a forward position would require five million camels, while the Russians could not supply more than 1,500 troops in Kabul through the winter. Kitchener was unimpressed by Clarke's data, and after a clash with Sir John Fisher Clarke gladly quit the Committee, later recalling plaintively that he had spent the best part of his life "trying to make great and eminent people understand what I think is right". Hankley later demonstrated how this could be done at the Committee by a less obtrusive and more indirect approach.

Though fortunately it was never put to the test, Gooch shows that British military planners had to take seriously the possibility of war with the United States in defence of Canada. This was an unattractive proposition, not merely because Canada was indefensible by land or sea, but also because Anglo-American trade was worth £400 million per annum. This detailed and bizarre exercise relates to the broader theme of the volume in revealing the utter incompatibility of the army and navy traditions, and the inability of the Committee of Imperial Defence to reconcile them. Here was already evident a serious flaw in inter-service relations which was to contribute to the failure in the Dardanelles campaign. Incidentally, I disagree with Gooch when he criticizes Sir Ian Hamilton for rejecting Ewart for a command at Gallipoli on the grounds that he was too fat to fit into a trench.

At one stage the defence of Canada ranked fourth out of five major operations envisaged for an expeditionary force. Though Clarke, Robertson and others called attention to the growing German threat to France and Belgium, it is a popular mistake to believe that this configuration monopolized the War Office's and the Army's attention from 1905. Gooch argues persuasively that the Continental commitment was by no means as clear-cut in Haldane's mind

when he undertook the reorganization of the Army in 1906 as his own post-war memoirs would suggest: "The coincidence of Haldane's advent to office, the Anglo-French staff conversations and the creation of the Expeditionary Force was indeed a coincidence and no more." Edward Spiers has developed the same thesis at greater length in *Haldane: an Army Reformer* (1980), but is more critical of the War Minister for so confusing the issue later. However, as Gooch points out, to deprive Haldane of the claim to extraordinary foresight is at the same time to free him from accusations of deception and to make him a human rather than a superhuman figure.

The essay on "Soldiers, Strategy and War Aims" is an important contribution to the study of civil-military relations in the First World War because it shows that generals and politicians held very different notions of "war aims" and how they were to be realized. Gooch believes that the generals, and Robertson in particular, had a more realistic view of what could be achieved with the limited forces available but were unable to get their expert advice accepted. He makes a good case for the military preoccupation with the Western Front, but it is well to remember that that generation of commanders had been brought up on the Napoleonic maxim of concentration of superior forces on the decisive front. This could manifest itself as a dogmatic opposition to the dispatch of any troops or weapons to other fronts.

This debate is taken up from the general's viewpoint in Gooch's concluding essay on "The Maurice Debate", which also illustrates the continuing lack of rapport between soldiers and politicians in the final year of the war. Sir Frederick Maurice, Director of Military Operations at the War Office until April 1918, sacrificed his military career in a vain attempt to expose political mismanagement of the war. Unfortunately for Maurice, he felt constrained to publicize specific charges by challenging Government statements on the number of troops in France in January 1918, compared with a year earlier, and the length of the French front Haig had been obliged to take over before the German breakthrough in March 1918. His task made easier by a weak statement of the Opposition's case from Asquith, Lloyd George successfully rebutted Maurice's allegations, though he is now known to have ignored corrected statistics which did not support his case.

All serious students of this subject will be glad to have these scattered articles available in one volume (albeit at a high price and without an index), while regretting that an opportunity has been missed to expand some of the topics; for example "The War Office and the Curragh Incident" is examined here only for the new light cast by the Ewart diaries; and an assessment of Fisher's role in the early years of the CIG would have made a splendid companion piece to the essay on Clarke. This is a nevertheless a stimulating book with a considerable revisionist thrust regarding the relationship between soldiers and statesmen. It can be read with profit by those concerned with Britain's contemporary defence policy as well as the historians for whom it is primarily intended.

*World Armaments and Disarmament: SIPRI Yearbook 1981*, produced by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (581pp. £19.50. Taylor and Francis Ltd. 0 85066 215 X) includes, after an Introduction dealing with "World military spending" and "Developments in nuclear weapons", chapters on (among others) the following aspects of world-wide nuclear and conventional armaments: "The evolution of military technology and defence strategy"; "A decade of military uses of outer space"; "Nuclear explosions"; and "The prohibition of inhumane and indiscriminate weapons". The book as a whole reflects in remarkable detail the general position put by Frank Barnaby in his *Foreword*. "Taken together, the last ten Yearbooks are a record of an alarming increase in world armaments." Tragically, there has been virtually no real progress in negotiations for disarmament.

## Foreign Travel

A Daring Journey by a Man of Letters Along the Loire from Source to Mouth or Thereabouts in 1912

He took a night express, first class, from Nantes to Paris, And at last A seat was soft below his arm, So long ago, so long ago.

The Loire'd been small and slow and fast, The Loire'd been wide and also narrow, And full of sand and very shallow, So long ago, so long ago.

He'd found the French ate spitted sparrow, As well as long hind legs of frogs, And little carts were pulled by dogs, So long ago, so long ago.

Inns had bad beds and smelly bogs, And wine the whole way down the Loire Had been too often weak and sour, So long ago, so long ago.

Pas autre chose, hélas, à boire, And tout droit hadn't meant turn right, And he'd been bitten day and night, So long ago, so long ago.

And flies buzzed black around the triplo On butchers' stalls down shifty alleys, And thorns blocked off most tempting valleys, So long ago, so long ago.

Bored with endless silver sallois From pointed Gerber de Junc Most of the flow to distant Nantes, So long ago, so long ago.

He'd thought that what these Frenchmen want Is fewer Joans of Arc in plaster, And fewer memories of disaster So long ago, so long ago.

And trains that travel rather faster, Nantes, Paris, Calais, Dover, His venture now is safely over, Long ago, so long ago.

Nantes, Paris, Calais, Dover, Now at last he's back at rest Where every single thing is best, And even navvies wear a vest, Long, long ago, so long ago.

Geoffrey Grigson

## A Poem in Doubt

I have a dream this year, Which is a rectory sold To friends: but when the auctioneer Has finished, what they own and hold

Has passed to me. I mean The large rooms high and clean, And gardens blossoming with flowers, And beds of fruit-trees. There the powers

Of darkness and the night Sweep down through owls in flight And fill the barns. The common blades Of axes are as blunt as spades

And do no work. The hand Of someone unseen moves His trowel through, and, lightly panned, Scatters the seedlings into grooves.

This was a dream, I hear - A voice beside my ear Report. That house you dream of dies. Look for a place of proper size

Down which no fungus crawls And sets: low ceilings, whence no heat Leaks out, and leaves you frozen feet,

And workless hours. I see Close to the kitchen door One shed for tools: and one dwarfed tree Beside the gate. You dreamed before

Too often of that grange Where you could so arrange All things to meet the needs of grace Approprate to a country place.

Draw in your horns, I say, And turn that house away Where all your energy would fail. Find something more on your own scale.

That was a dream, too. Guilt In common clothes of brown Came through the double doors I built, And sneered, and pulled my great house down.

George MacBeth

## Describing the indescribable

By Robin Robbins

JOHN BEATTIE:

The Yorkshire Ripper Story  
160pp. Quaker/Daily Star. £2.50.  
0 7043 3388 0

DAVID A. YALLOP

Deliver Us From Evil  
374pp. Macdonald Futura. £6.95  
(paperback, £1.75).  
0 354 04565 2

On the pavement outside a block of Sheffield council-flats where a woman had fallen to her death earlier in the day there was a blood-stained patch of sawdust. Round it stood a group of children, during the boldest to dip his toe in the sludge. Not far away, up Cemetery Road, kids had been plundering graves, throwing the bones about, and trying to sell skulls to antique dealers. In *The Yorkshire Ripper Story* John Beattie presents some gravediggers' reminiscences of Peter Sutcliffe's behaviour while working with them. According to one, he cut off corpses' fingers to steal rings, yanked out gold tooth-fillings with pliers, and, more significantly, revelled in decomposing and mutilated remains. Another recalls that "he had this awful habit of lurking in the ' Chapel of Rest', a third that when Sutcliffe became a mortuary attendant it was the bodies of accident victims and of those opened up for post-mortems that he liked best.

The gruesome games of children need not be taken as a sign of a generation of rippers in the making, rather as a normal phase in coming to terms with death, a phase which for Sutcliffe did not pass. Nevertheless, David Yallop in another example of the thriving Ripper-book industry, *Deliver Us From Evil*, is right to assert that the breeding-ground for Sutcliffe's crimes had existed for many years. Yallop sees Sutcliffe's attitudes being fostered in the widespread acceptance of violence against women; it is perhaps more accurately described as a general immaturity which finds violence easier to accept than sex. When housewife Emily Jackson was murdered, what set the wire-curtain heads of local gossip a-wagging according to Yallop, was not her horrible death, but the fact that she had turned whore.

Many people eagerly enjoy the killing of their fellow-beings, the bloodier and more painful the better. Social decorum demands a veil of pretext: the victims must be different in some way more or less superficial - foreign, or black, or gay, or female, or "no better than they should be". While it was wrongly put about by the police that the Ripper attacks were only on prostitutes, the Great British Public enjoyed its tabloid doses and let him get on with it. Not until the police produced an "innocent" victim - innocent sexually, that is - did the tribe howl for vengeance; its quiet, vicarious relish giving way to the pleasure of the hunt. To their credit, both Yallop and Beattie vehemently denounce the hypocrisy of a society which takes it for granted that women who exchange sex for money on the streets deserve to be murdered, an assumption implicit not only in the attitudes of police and public, but in the words of the prosecutor and the judge at Sutcliffe's trial. Beattie's question, "Is not this the same priggish mentality which, in its extreme form, led Sutcliffe to kill?" wrongly ascribes the force of motive to mere sanction, but is worth pondering.

We are members of a society which offered as compensation to a victim who survived skull-fractures and stab-wounds in her abdomen and back "less", as Yallop puts it, "than the cost of the meals eaten by the police officers during the particular enquiry into that case. As none of Sutcliffe's nine interviews were asked for a blood sample by other men, and later still we find her for shopping. Our universally educated society gave ear to the woefully fatuous fallacies of a "clairaudient", an "occultist", "map-drawers", astrologers, and other quacks, fools and lunatics who leapt into the light of the

Ripper hunt. And when, a few weeks after Sutcliffe's twelfth known murder, the police hopefully played the hoax tape over and over again without success. United football ground, the fans drowned it with chants of: "You'll never catch the Ripper!" and "Twelve nil! Twelve nil!" Nor were those lads the only ones with cause to rejoice: when the tape was put on a telephone-answering machine, British Telecom, as it now is, netted an estimated £40,000.

After listing half a dozen unsolved murders in West Yorkshire between 1970 and 1977, Yallop asks: "Exactly how many murderers were and are still on the loose in Yorkshire?" It would be facile, however, to look on killing as simply a local sport east of the Pennines: the sickening story of the Yorkshire Ripper only re-emphasizes what is evident from the Old Testament as well as today's newspapers: that a large proportion of the human race finds both pleasure and profit in bloodshed, so long as the victim is someone else.

Yallop is a campaigning as well as an investigative journalist (as the press-release reminds us, he is "the author of... the true story behind the Fatty Arbuckle scandal", and two other books on murder cases). His campaign here is primarily against the West Yorkshire and Greater Manchester Police. Although the Ripper was widely supposed during his rampage to be meticulously careful and successful in leaving no identifiable traces, clues accumulated from quite early on. His fingerprints gave accurate description of him and his car, according to Yallop, that was disregarded because the police assumed there was no link with the two murders of prostitutes in Leeds in the preceding six months. A year later, after two more murders, they had a complete set of tyre-marks, a clear footprint, and a bloody handprint. Ten weeks later they had a bloody palm-print and a car-description that was nearly accurate. Three months later they made an almost total mess of a very precise lead, a brand-new five-pointed note, which it had been followed up as quickly as possible, could have directed them to one particular pay-packet. In another couple of months they had a full set of tyre-marks again, plus a surviving victim's description that included the conspicuous "Jason King" moustache. Within six months came yet another set of tyre-marks, detectably changed. A year later the size 7 bootprint appeared again.

That Sutcliffe killed at least seven more times after he was first questioned; that he was allegedly interviewed on nine occasions without the police realizing he was the man they were looking for; that he had been questioned in September 1969 for hitting a woman over the head in the Bradford district where he later perpetrated four known attacks; and that he had been convicted in the same month after pursuing a prostitute with a hammer, and been fined for "going equipped for theft" - all these matters of history give grounds for questioning police perceptiveness and procedures. It may be objected that to single out the reliable clues is easier now than it was then. There were misleading descriptions of the attacker and his car which could not at that time be discounted. Yallop himself makes mistakes which, given his hindsight, are less excusable: he writes "Walshead" for "Halifax"; the car he supposes to have been used for the attack on Marilyn Moore changes from Ford Corsair to Morris Oxford and back again; the deductions he makes from tyre-marks are confused. Nevertheless, the hard clues were not so numerous as to be impossible to check during the 700,000 police man-hours costing £6,000,000 (according to Yallop; less plausibly 5,000,000) hours costing £4,000,000, according to Beattie's report on the cases. As none of Sutcliffe's nine interviews were asked for a blood sample by other men, and later still we find her for shopping. Our universally educated society gave ear to the woefully fatuous fallacies of a "clairaudient", an "occultist", "map-drawers", astrologers, and other quacks, fools and lunatics who leapt into the light of the

misjudgment in the Ripper investigation was followed in to the end, and then at the highest level, with the Chief Constable clearly implying at the press conference, after the arrest that an untried defendant was guilty beyond reasonable doubt. As Yallop points out earlier in his book, and as the reviewer can confirm from watching a CID interview, policemen tend to ape their television images: unfortunately, it was his American counterparts that Chief Constable Gregory aped.

At least the police were persistent: they persisted in believing the attacker was interested only in prostitutes, and always acted in the same way, thus discounting useful clues from attacks on other women. They persisted in believing the author of the hoax letters and tape was the Ripper, himself, though the idea had been discredited in the interviews by both the Northumbrian police and academic experts. They persisted in romanticizing the hunt as one officer's personal crusade, a limiting approach that undermined team-morale. They persisted in rejecting suggestions of outside help.

Some of them may have been needlessly callous;



"Having their photograph taken" (1970). This Lowry drawing in pencil and felt pen is included in a sale of Modern British and Continental pictures, watercolours, drawings and sculpture, to be held at Christie's South Kensington, 85 Old Brompton Road, London SW7 on July 22.

"Are you X's father?" "Yes, and I'll kill her when she comes in for staying out all night and not letting us know." "You won't have to. Someone's already done that."

More disquieting than this piece of reported dialogue are Mr Yallop's allegations that another victim's parents were kept needlessly in acute suspense for five hours, and that while prostitutes were being used as live bait in Bradford in 1979-80 officers sat in a car and watched one being attacked, without helping or calling help because they were only there to collect car-numbers. The heroes in blue lack sympathy or courage, they did manage to arrest eleven women picketing a cinema showing *Violation of the Black*. We may thank the force for preserving our freedom to make money by displaying the aggressive humiliation of women.

Yallop records less amusing episodes, such as the scene in which policemen forced a victim's boyfriend to give a semen specimen to ascertain his blood-group. The investigation also produced, according to Yallop other fringe-benefits for participants: a woman had to submit to the confidence of the Sheffield police, inspiring a successful search for the weapons, to break through where a day's questioning by West Yorkshire detectives failed.

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had perhaps "justified his atrocities in his own mind by cloaking them with a perverted sort of morality". Beattie provides some relevant personal history: as well as the gross horrors of Sutcliffe's time at the cemetery in 1964, there was in the same year his attempt to cut off his best friend's penis, and three years earlier his leadership of a field's Angels gang. His mother, an orphaned strict sexual morality, rejecting a daughter who got pregnant before marriage. Two years after the family forced his mother to break off an extra-marital affair of her own, Sutcliffe started killing.

On its own, this situation suggests a Hamlet-Ophelia-Ophelia set-up, but Sutcliffe's already established morbidity and violence must be remembered. They dispose also of Yallop's conventionally sentimental idea that it was Sutcliffe's wife's childlessness that set him off. His first known murder occurred only eleven months after his marriage; his first known attack, for which he was cautioned, five years before. Yallop postulates "a raging evil jealousy because so many of his victims were of child-bearing age." This is mere speculation: the preoccupation with children is Yallop's own (he constantly reminds readers of the victims' offspring, and enumerates them at the front of the book); one of the victims was only sixteen, four others in their forties. Prostitutes do not leap to mind as a group blessed with large, happy families. Beattie strains belief less with his portrait of a man who "couldn't bear straight sex" with a fifteen-year-old girlfriend - "It used to disturb him even talking about it" - a man who behaved as "a perfect gentleman" with "decent girls", but found his compelling pleasures in the red-light district he visited the night before his marriage; a man for whom, given both his relish for corpses and his conventional hypocrisy, repression, and guilt about sex, "the penetration of the knife or screw-driver had come to mean more than the penetration of the penis. There is some evidence that the act of killing caused him to ejaculate."

Yallop is not totally loyal to his thesis of child-envy: at one point he imagines Sutcliffe enraged by seeing whores busier than ever in Chapelton, soon after a murder. *Deliver Us From Evil* reads in many places like a work of fiction, swelled with attributed thought, speech, and action, whose nature is dictated by assumptions the author has already made. With regard to Sutcliffe himself and his dead victims we can be sure that most of the words are totally imagined by Yallop. With



other people we have no way of knowing how much derives from the memories as elicited by reporters, how much Yallop has augmented and coloured the material. In conventional journalistic manner he interviews let alone apparently written through her adolescence by an eventual non-prostitute victim. Since there is no connected destiny involved, the private chatter of this lively but ordinary girl provokes no deeply tragic feeling, but simply pathos, and the feeling of its irrelevance. The wider readership of this book may well not realize that many of its scenes must be wholly imaginary. In so far as the embroidery and interpretation are subjective and wrong, the book may overall be harmfully misleading, for all its substantial criticism of the police investigation.

John Beattie's much slighter (and more expensive) *The Yorkshire Ripper Story* is also aided with over-written "imaginative reconstruction", though of a less debatable nature. "Coolly and professionally they examined the horror that lay at their feet. . . . Hardened detectives all, they looked down with anger and sadness at the pitiful bundle at their feet. . . . Slowly Sir Michael began to describe the indescribable." The writing is sometimes downright careless: Assistant Chief Constable George Oldfield cannot have been flattered to learn that "before long his name was to become synonymous with that of the Yorkshire Ripper". The book is padded out with elaborate scene-setting, such as a potted history of Chapelwau, where, in the nineteenth century "with the thrift and

diligence of their race the Jews of Leeds . . . began thriving". Beattie or the *Daily Star* team – is imbued with the values of the pond he swims in, emphasizing the common-law marriage of one victim (marriage-lines failed in shield another), and remarking that "predictably the genuinely concerned members" of action groups to protect women "melted away in time and the whole campaign degenerated into shrill Marxist propaganda tinged with Lesbian Lib". Of course there are some people who find it hard to attribute genuine concern or any sort of human decency to people with Marxist views or to lesbians. Tough as the latter are in Leeds, they are responding to realities.

Neither of these hastily compiled books is authoritative, let alone definitive: their disagreements are sometimes more illuminating than their coincident material, so that at this stage anyone seriously trying to understand the pathological interaction of killer and community had better read both Yallop and Beattie, as well as all the others (at least three to date). When as accurately documented an account as is possible appears, it will be of interest to many specialists and, one hopes, on the curriculum at Hendon. The Manchester police have learnt one thing: the chances given by that vital £5 note were wasted partly because the victim's body and then her handbag remained undiscovered for so long. Now, on a Sunday morning, you may see a routine foot-patrol strolling over patches of waste ground with a dog. Back, as they so often said, to the bobby on the beat.

## Up before the beaks

By Marise Cremona

MICHAEL KING:  
The Framework of Criminal Justice  
159pp. Croom Helm. £10.95.  
0 7099 0430 4

In the introductory chapter to *The Framework of Criminal Justice*, Michael King argues that the main existing methods of analysis of the criminal justice system are inadequate. On the one hand, the traditional approach of the legal textbook, which concentrates on the laws and rules governing the system, virtually ignores the extent to which participants' behaviour actually reflects those rules. On the other hand, those whose attitude to the system is coloured by a particular social theory, attempt to particularise the activity of the courts purely in terms of a particular "social function". Within each theory certain characteristics of the system are stressed as reflecting this social function: for example, justice, class domination or rehabilitation. King proposes instead six "process models". In effect, six different viewpoints or ideological perspectives which may be adopted either by participants in the system or by sociological observers, and from which the criminal justice system is examined.

The next step in the argument is a description of a particular type of criminal trial. A statement of the formal rules governing the procedure is followed by a somewhat anecdotal account of several "scenes". In the process, such as being held at a police station, and being sentenced. These are then examined from the point of view of each of the "process models". No kind of synthesis is attempted; the exercise is intended to "expand the traditional conceptual framework" of those studying the criminal justice system with the aim of giving a more complete understanding of its complexities.

However the enquiry is limited in its scope: to guilty pleas in Magistrates' Courts, and the justification for this is not entirely convincing. It is argued that very few defendants plead "not guilty" in Magistrates' Courts and that contested cases receive a disproportionate amount of attention. Nevertheless, there are several instances where a (surely not inevitably unbalanced) comparison between the two would have proved interesting. The limitation to Magistrates' Courts is more understandable.

able; a similar treatment of Crown Court trial would have made the book unwieldy, though again it gives an air of incompleteness to the analysis in some places.

Within these boundaries, the application of the six "process models" to the procedures leading up to and following a guilty plea is much the most interesting section of the book. The discussion of the "process models" themselves is useful, and gives an impression of the widely differing perspectives from which the system is viewed. They include the Due Process model, with its aim of justice and emphasis on equality between the parties and restraint of arbitrary power. The Crime Control model, on the other hand, places the stress on punishment, emphasizing the importance of a high conviction rate and support for the police.

The analysis throws light on the tension that results from the attempt to work towards several different, not always compatible, ideals. It is surely true, as is hinted by Michael King, that the diagnostic or treatment aims of the Medical model are not best served by an adversarial system of justice, still apparent in the hearing of a guilty plea.

But the value of the exercise is limited by the fact that the analysis of the theories is not critical. Each of them clearly may provide an explanation for at least some of the characteristics of a criminal trial. However, Michael King acknowledges that "the mere fact that a particular theory may account successfully for some aspects of knowledge does not bring 'one closer to the truth in an absolute sense'". It is in this section, moreover, that one feels the absence of any consideration of the contested trial. Important questions as to how Magistrates reach decisions on the facts are not examined. The description of the attempts made by the regular participants to reduce open conflict; the acceptance by Magistrates of the police version of events, and the difficulty of challenging this, would have been more effective in the context of a comparison with the requirements of proof and the possibilities for cross-examination in a contested case.

In spite of its limitations, the book would be useful reading for students beginning a study of criminal procedure, or indeed criminal law generally. It offers a view of the criminal justice system that does not rely solely on an account of the formal rules.

## The wearing of the vizard

By Geoffrey Parker

ALAN MACFARLANE with SARAH HARRISON

The Justice and the Mare's Ale  
Law and disorder in seventeenth-century England  
238pp. Oxford: Blackwell. £8.50.  
0 631 12681 3

This slim volume presents an everyday story of Westmorland country folk between 1681 and 1684. A gang of five or six mounted armed men, some wearing "vizards" or masks, led by William Smorhwait, gentleman, committed a series of crimes – burglary, theft, highway robbery, intimidation, assault, coin-clipping and other "dark and horrible deeds" – to the terror of the subjects of Good King Charles II living in the vicinity of Kendal, Kirby Lonsdale and Penrith. Each of the gang's crimes is narrated in vast detail: the account of the theft in 1680 of £43 and sundry goods from a half-blind gentleman, Robert Robinson, in an isolated house, takes up no less than twelve pages, and the deposition of eleven witnesses are printed in full.

This prolixity is not necessarily bad thing, for the statements made by these and other deponents shed considerable light on the life of seventeenth-century North-countrymen. We find that the leader of the gang, William Smorhwait, although arrested twice by law-enforcement officers, was apprehended on both occasions (like some more recent notorious offenders) entirely by accident – the first time because he happened to ride into a Justice of the Peace on his way to Quarter-Sessions; the second time because he was in the company of a highwayman when the latter was arrested under a warrant of "hue and cry". Smorhwait, who was hanged in 1684 after trial before the famous Judge Jeffreys, emerges as a colourful, mercurial and rather likeable character. On one occasion he stole "the wine bought for the communion, whilst the churchwardens were asleep . . . filling the bottles up with whiskeys". Yet at the burglary in 1680 he still had enough faith in the power of religion to "hold a Bible to Robert Robinson to swear whether he had any more gold or silver than what they had taken from him".

But what does it all mean? Alan Macfarlane's excuse for rescuing the deeds of the Smorhwait gang from near-total obscurity is that they are, in some way, typical: that their careers reveal certain deep truths about the life of northern English country people in the late seventeenth century. Certainly they had imitators. In April 1684, one Henry Holme of Sedburgh got drunk "and called himself by the name William Smorhwait, and did ride up and down . . . [saying] no matter what take him"; but, as far as the authors know, the Smorhwaites and their escapades never became enshrined in a pamphlet or ballad of the time, although their legend has survived in oral tradition. This account depends very heavily on a single source: the local JP, Sir Daniel Fleming of Rydal, whose strong and almost sinister face still strikes chill as it gazes out at the reader from page 41, took extensive notes on the trial and preserved the depositions of the witnesses. "It would have been impossible to write this book without Fleming; for we would have had no detailed records of what happened." Even with Fleming's manuscripts, there are certain gaps (for example, it is not known precisely where the Smorhwaites were hanged) but they are not numerous or significant. The real question remains: how valuable is a single case-study, based largely on a single source?

Many celebrated historians, in their own writings, exhibit no doubts concerning the value of micro-history. To take but two examples first published in English last year: Carlo Cipolla's *Fall, Reason, and Plague: a Tuscan Story of the Seventeenth Century and the Worms*; and *The Cheese and the Worms: the Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Village*. Both use a single source on a particular event to reveal the prevailing public and private attitudes and behaviour patterns in early modern Italy. But historical voyeurism will not work when the key-hole is too small. Readers of Cipolla's brief study emerge knowing next to nothing about the range of remedies and responses available to rural and urban communities confronted by the plague. We only know about Monte Lupo and the 1630 epidemic; and even for that, the documentation is incomplete, so that the texture of village existence is never really brought to life. And Menocchio, the hero of *The Cheese and the Worms*, remains an enigma: was his cosmography truly unique, or were there innumerable millers, each evolving bizarre explanations of the world in which they lived, scattered throughout northern Italy and even beyond? The author, of course, cannot say.

Is the single case-study by Dr Macfarlane any more representative? He claims to have searched diligently through the northern assize records, thus covering the Border shires of Northumberland and Cumberland as well as Westmorland – for the century following 1650, and finds that "no other set of events attracted as much attention as those to be described." So the Smorhwaites are admitted to be "abnormal", probably unique. But, even so, they were incompetent: their crimes were spasmodic, their organization lax (sometimes they spent so long on the highway disappearing), their execution indifferent. They relied more on bluster than on actual violence, and their neighbours reacted with offers of arbitration between criminal and victim rather than with either terror or vengeance.

All this is important, because to demonstrate the occasional, exceptional nature of organized violence in early modern England is, in fact, a whole point of this book. Whereas Glazebrook used Menocchio's world-picture to prove the existence of an autonomous and continuous peasant culture, Macfarlane argues that the Smorhwait saga indicates that peasant society in England simply did not exist after the thirteenth century, for peasant societies (he believes) have high levels of violence and he cites (in his concluding chapter) three bizarrely chosen examples of what he considers to be the endemic violence characteristic of them: a gang from seventeenth-century China; Brittany and Languedoc in the eighteenth century; the mafia of a Sicilian village, 1860-1960. All these communities had bandits and were "peasant societies": the nearest thing to bandits that Westmorland could boast was the Smorhwaites, ergo it was not a peasant society. On the last page of the text we read, "The absence of bandits in England is consistent with the fact that, as I have argued elsewhere, from at least the thirteenth century England has not had any bandits." (The "elsewhere" refers to *The Origins of English Individualism*, a work which sought to explain why English society evolved differently from the rest of the world.)

But, of course, while the "absence of bandits" may be "consistent with" the absence of peasant society, not all peasant societies had them. A series of articles studying crime in early modern Normandy some years ago also failed to find significant organized crime or banditry; yet who argues that the rural population of the *pagage* were "quintessentially peasants"? Macfarlane considers only three out of the numerous available published studies of banditry. If one looks at them all, it would seem that the peasant societies which could support a high and sustained level of organized crime were normally adjacent to international – either international or inter-regional – so that escape from pursuit was always possible. The parts of Spanish Languedoc, which bordered on the minor states of the Po valley, the frontier between Valencia and Castile or Catalonia, the politically fragmented triangle of territory between Maastricht, Aachen and Sittard: these were the ideal spawning grounds for bandits.

Now, of course, Westmorland was also a frontier area: Kirby Lonsdale was only sixty miles from the border with Scotland (a fact which is largely ignored in this book, just as Scotland itself is only mentioned once). And

until the union of crowns in 1603 the Anglo-Scottish border had been the scene of considerable organized violence. But, Macfarlane tells us, by the reign of Charles II this was no longer so, and his assertion is based on a survey of the Northern Assize records for the century following 1650. Yet the closer examination of these records in an unpublished doctoral thesis of C.M.F. Ferguson (St Andrews, 1981) does not entirely bear him out. Between 1660 and 1700, only about one-quarter of all surviving indictments for the three northern shires were for larceny – yet students of other parts of England have found 70 per cent to be the norm at this time. Clearly the former Marches were exceptional. Almost a third of all indictments (51 per cent of Westmorland's) were for religious non-conformity – whether Quaker, Presbyterian or Catholic, and a further 26 per cent involved assault, riotous assembly or false-breaking, mainly by people acting in groups. Thus in Northumberland, between 1660 and 1692, although less than 200 persons were indicted for assaults committed alone, over 800 were indicted for assaults committed in groups.

Nor was group violence anything new in Restoration times: previous escapades well remembered vividly as the Smorhwaites donned their vizards. In 1596, for example, in a celebrated episode, Walter Scott of Buccleugh had led thirty clansmen in a successful assault on Carlisle castle (where the Smorhwait brothers were later detained) to release the notorious thief, William Armstrong, known as Kinnmont Willie, who was imprisoned there. Seven years later, in the week following the death of Queen Elizabeth I in March 1603, an orgy of looting and violence broke out which caused the death of six men, the capture and ransom of fourteen more, the destruction of property worth £6,750 and the rustling of 5000 head of cattle. An army was required to put an end to what contemporaries euphemistically called "The Busy Week".

The extent of this violence thoroughly alarmed the government so that in 1605 a new institution, known as the Border Commissioners, was created to police the troubled "middle shires" (as James VI and I insisted on calling the border region). Although the commission (which is never mentioned by Macfarlane) lapsed during the 1650s, it was renewed in 1662, and as late as 1675 the English Border commissioners alone tried 140 persons, mostly for violent crimes, and sentenced twelve to death, twenty-six to prison, and twelve more to other corporal penalties. By then, however, the commissioners had begun to feel that their work was superfluous. The next year they felt able to boast: "now at this time are seldom any thiefs committed but subjects may leave out freely their horse, kye or sheep in the field, and after 1678 there are no further records for the English commissioners. The JPs and assize judges were thought to be sufficient.

It was at precisely this point, when the "middle shires" were no longer considered a "special case", that the Smorhwait brothers, and their accomplices, began their life of crime. Thus already they were social dinosaurs: gentlemen no longer led bands to pillage and loot as they had before the Civil War. But everyone could remember the time when they did. The Smorhwaites were by no means the atypical offenders that Macfarlane would have us believe, just as the border shires were not static, stable environments from 1200 to 1750 that he portrays. There can be no safe generalization from these events, or these areas, to the rest of the kingdom. And since this supportive role is the book's *raison d'être*, we are left with a charming but isolated chapter in the everyday life of some two dozen seventeenth-century country folk. It is not enough.

Originally published in 1973, the third edition of Michael Zander's *Cases and Materials on the English Legal System* (476pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £17.50. 0 297 782226) has been extensively revised and updated: all material relevant to law-making, a subject now dealt with separately in Zander's companion volume, *The Law-Making Process*, has been omitted.

## The top line and the sub-text

By Peter Conrad

A Midsummer Night's Dream  
Glyndebourne

Peter Grimes  
Covent Garden

Auden sniffed at Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as "pure Kensington", implying that its exotic backdrop was a trimmed and tamed suburban park, grazed by fairies as winsome as Rackham's. He was wrong about that: Britten's music does elicit the irrationality and sick sorcery of the play, and the community of his wood is as slumberously oppressive as the gossiping small town of his *Peter Grimes*. But the opera is certainly pure Glyndebourne, an exact adjustment of art to the place's atmosphere, and Peter Hall's new production there is a marvel – staged with creepy animism on a silver platform peopled with limber, eurythmic trees; cast to perfection; and conducted by Bernard Haitink with a concern not for pastoral whimsies but for the poisoning entanglement which is the wood's sexual undergrowth.

The initial service of Hall's production is as a reminder of how brilliantly Britten has transposed the play to music. The justification of a Shakespearean opera is its discovery of a musical impulse inside or beneath the words, which is anxious to be let out – in Verdi's *Otello* it's what Wilson Knight later heard as "the *Otello* music", the hero's recourse to self-celebrating or self-extinguishing song; with the same composer's *Falstaff*, music redeems the dramatic character's moral frailties, since it attests to the energy and ebullience which course through him and excuse his lapses; and Britten's music records the unarticulated or disembodied fantasies of the Shakespearean characters.

Music is the sleep of the play's reason. *The Dream* hints at the analogies between imagination and the truant states of sleep, magic, even lunacy. For its human characters, sleep is consolation and restoration, sealing sorrow's eye. For the fairies, it is an associative liberty like Ariel's, licensing their intrusion into consciousness while reason dozes. For the rustics, it is a rudimentary form of imagination: Bottom could have called his experience a vision, but he chooses to classify it as a dream, which is how Puck in the epilogue offers to define the play itself. Thesens, the play's theoretician of imagination and of dramatic genre, marshals these various definitions and categorizes imagination as a mental power which derives from mental recurrency. The poet's confederates are the lunatic and the lover, but his art organizes their exuberant, transitory frights and frenzies and confers on illusions a corporeal solidity, "a local habitation and a name".

Thesens and Hippolyta, in one of the scenes cut from the libretto, invoke music as a symbol of concord, confusion, a chaos of sounds which (like the intertwining existences of the play) unravels into a natural harmony. Listening to the horns and hounds echoing in conjunction, they praise "so musical a discord, such sweet thunder". Music has charmed and pacified the affray of the chase, making human order out of the baying of the hounds (as Thesens says) tuneable and cheering. Here is the cue for Britten's opera. The characters of the play, confined to words; fumble to rescue a verbal meaning from their dreams. Bottom is convinced of the eloquence and argumentative purport of unreason: "I have an exposition of sleep upon me". But all he can do when he awakes is to confound reason with nonsensical paradoxes ("the eye of being hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen . . ."). The lovers remain amazed by the polyphonic in-

terfusion of their minds which has contrived what Thesens calls "this gentle concord" between them.

Where words fail, music takes over. If imagination in the play is reason's sleep, then Britten's music is the sleep of language. His score begins by transcribing the collective unconsciousness of nature – a snore and slither on cellos and basses as the nocturnal earth breathes and Glyndebourne's animated trees rustle. Before enticing these initial, primal sounds from the orchestra, Bernard Haitink wisely left a long moment of stillness, after the curtain had parted on the grey murk of John Bury's wood. Thus, when the first rumblings were eventually heard, they seemed, like the aquatic life-stream welling up inaudibly in *Das Rheingold*, to be silence overheard, the earth eavesdropped on. This subliminal music stirs out of silence and is exhaled, or (in Forster's word, talking about the reverberation after the end of a Beethoven symphony) expands, back into a silence inaccessible to words. Silence and a concomitant oblivion are the beatitudes of pastoral: the innocence of obtuse naps, the peace of sinking gratefully into a vegetable or mineral state and becoming like everything else in the landscape, a mere object. This is the secret joy of Snout's impersonation, in the play within the play, of a wall. Like one of Wordsworth's rustics, who seem asleep or dead in their immobility, he has attained the pastoral bliss and silence of insensibility. The courtiers snidely wonder at hearing a partition discourse, but the special bequest of music to the play is that it implants a longing in things, devises an idiom for inarticulacy.

The music's emergence from a silent sleep means that its first sound is a stertorous growl, followed by a yawn. These subterranean murmurs are the unsettled heavings of the proscribed Id: music here, as in Wagner, is a threatening noise from beneath the floor, the dissonance of unconsciousness. Britten's score hums, like the cooing murmur of the spell, which infects the orchestra like the sexual plague advancing through Britten's *Death in Venice*; the barnyard grunts and snarls which erupt beneath the frolics of the rustics; the nervous fever of the music for the lovers. The opera is interested not only in setting words but in their evaporation into sleepy wordless sound, Coloratura, in Titania's posturing of sleep, uses the voice not for communication or even self-expression, but for self-hypnotism. While the orchestra swoons, she sings offstage, her words a slivery blur. A hullyaby like this is both a prescription for sleep and an anticipation of it: the ultimate reason for singing it is, as Auden says, to make us "hear nothing at all". If her voice is a narcotic, the music of the lovers illustrates the voice's human liability to weariness and sleepy weakness. Demipity, faltering on the ground, having sung himself into exhaustion.

The vocal hierarchy extends between two antagonistic elements – the air in which the fairies can render themselves invisible; the earth which sullies the rustics. The singing of the fairies belies their bodies. Oberon is a counter-tenor, Titania, a virtuosically high soprano. The rustics on the contrary are gruff because corporeal. The transition from one vocal range to the other duplicates the imagination's feat which is, as Thesens says, an act of incorporation: attuning with a body and an earthly actuality; fantasies as diaphanously non-existent as the fairies are.

Britten is always re-traversing this hierarchy. In the song of the fairies at the beginning, the ascending and descending musical scale is the chain of being, up and down which they commune at will. Hence too Britten's musical equivalent of Shakespeare's

joke about the rivalry between tall Helena and dwarfish Hermia. The contrast between their statures becomes an invidious vocal ranking. Helena is a soprano, while Hermia is demoted to a mezzo, then in taunting Helena her voice oscillates menacingly along the same scale the fairies negotiate so deftly. The subliminal and bathetic downward dives of the orchestra (as in that initial lunging snore) are countered by the contraposition of the voices from earth into air (as in Starveling's starved falsetto homage to the moon). Sometimes the voices, abandoning the attempt to utter words, merely recapitulate this movement up and down, in and out of bodily form – the brays which hiccup through Bottom's vocal line, or his ecstatic yawn when couched with Titania; the lion's rampaging growl; Thesbe's yodelling trill on "eyes".

With the lovers, music's accomplishment is to change a farcical confusion of identities into an indolent interpretation of them. Magic is a means of psychological trespass for the fairies: the juice of the herb allows Oberon to enter and alter the fantasy of Titania. The human beings first experience such psychological mutuality as cosy amity. Helena and Hermia are "two lovely berries, moulded on one stem, / So with two seeming bodies, but one heart". But when they begin to compete sexually, the closeness becomes vexatious. Music represents their bewildered attempt to differentiate themselves while only confirming their inseparability, entwining their voices as if fugally in their current. When they awake to find themselves reassorted, the musical structure is a metaphor for reconciliation: the patterned entries and repetitive accords of a canon quartet.

In the course of the opera, music changes from a device for interior intrusion (the twisting rhythms which follow the course of the potion as it deranges Titania) to a means of exorcism, and as such it is summoned by Oberon and Titania to vanquish sleep, just as it had earlier been employed to induce sleep. The music of the earlier scenes is overhead: it's the monologue of the restive earth. The distant horns which awaken the lovers, a residue of Thesens's hunting party (otherwise omitted from the libretto), announce a new definition of music as celebration and officiation. Thesens describes his own conversion from conqueror to wooer as a change in tonality ("I will wed thee in another key"), and the interlude of transformation from the wood to his palace enacts that progress from drowsy ambiguity to solemnity and pomp. The opera's notion of its own form is also modified. Previously, magic had provided Britten with a justification for the motiveless and instantaneous infatuations of operatic convention, as in Lysander's spasm of capitulation to Helena. Having vindicated opera and its sexual obsessions, Britten now chooses, to deride it, in the Donizetti parody of his rustics' play. Music, which had been engaged in self-exploration and in eavesdropping on nature, renounces those romantic and psychological ambitions and offers itself here as entertainment and diversion, knowingly self-trivialized, or, when Oberon and Titania return, as blasphemous not sorcery.

Choosing to cut Thesens and Hippolyta from the beginning and also serving them for the final scene, Britten has made his *Midsummer Night's Dream* both a commentary on operatic tradition – in the contrast between its own investigation of the sickness of sexual love in the first two acts and the culinary spectacle with which the bored courtiers are amused in the third – and an astute reversal of "musical" history. In Schopenhauer's monodrama, *Erwartung*, a woman enters by moonlight in a forest which is her own demented mind, and finds there the body of the man she loved and has probably



Tuneable and cheering: one of more than 800 pictures (another appears on the cover of this issue) illustrating musicians and musical instruments, real and imaginary, comic and serious, of all periods. In Music: A Pictorial Archive. Woodcuts and Engravings, selected by Jim Hunter (155pp. Constable. £3.90 paperback. 0 486 24002 9), to be published later this month.

killed. Britten begins in the same haunted forest of bad dreams, but conducts his characters safely out of its atonal dubiety and back to the verdor shelter of courtly ceremony. "Out of this wood do not desire to go", Titania orders Bottom. But Britten, who flinches from psychological exposure (and prefers to avoid the crises of revelation which opera incites, deciding for instance merely to paraphrase Vere's announcement of death to Billy Budd with a succession of elegiac chords), wants to be released from the "place's spell". When Oberon, Titania and the fairies invade the house after bedtime, they are no longer the shrill and malevolent panders of the earlier scenes but have been domesticated, and busy themselves with sweeping the floor and consoling human nuptials.

In Peter Hall's production, questionable parties in the forest is the court removed outdoors, with the fairies as impenetrable and Oberon and Titania as Elizabethan grandees, their ruffs and jewels complemented by metallic hair-dos and spiky Mr Spock ears. The lovers, in contrast, are dressed as members of the bourgeoisie, and so, startlingly, are Thesens and Hippolyta. This decision upsets the tense parity there ought to be between those alternative monarchs: Oberon, whose nocturnal kingdom is that of reverie and desire, and Thesens, who has power over life and death but not, like his demonic counterpart, over the unconscious mind; who rules a more prosaic territory and legislates classical standards for music and for drama; tolerating poets as diverting lunatics.

The understating of Thesens (the unmagisterial Lieke Vrieser) also sabotages this necessary balance. Though Glyndebourne has an excellent quartet of lovers and a fine troop of mechanicals, the performance is dominated by the fairies – no epicurean (rebell) but a guttersnipe of acrobatic nimbleness; the brooding, blanched, reptilian Oberon of James Bowman; above all the Titania of Diana Corbitt, who in this production has a vocal effluence and sings with a childlike, unearthly radiance. Her first entry, when her soprano chimera in sudden sardonic

unison with Bowman's counter-tenor, is the most perverse duet in all opera – a vocal equivalent to that gelid, enslaved eroticism which Jan Kott found in the play.

The sensual delight and moral peril of subsidence into sleep, which for Britten constitutes the problem of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, is anticipated in his *Peter Grimes*, where the dilemma is the connected one of relapse into the community and its smug self-congratulating normality. The alien Grimes longs to be reclaimed by the society he affects to despise, but knows it will never admit him to membership. Enraged by his intransigence, the chattering citizenry resolves to exterminate him. He finds in the elements the refuge society denies him. He is rooted, he tells Balstrode; not in the community but in the landscape, and is at last benignly swallowed by the sea. The opera's sceptical subtext is its suspicion that, despite Grimes's faith in respectability, joining society may be as dangerous as losing yourself in Oberon's wood: Grimes pines for the harbour of domestic peace; yet it will ensnare him, since its representative is the schoolmarm Ellen Orford, with her ennobling, connoisseurly regime of knitting and embroidery. "His solitary," sexually outwaded self-will rejects the family, but his courage fails when he sees there's no life outside its protected area.

Like *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, with its uneasy vacillation between the alluring, treacherous wood and the etiquette of the court, *Peter Grimes* develops from unsolvable doubts in Britten. Its intention was to symbolize home-coming. The first act ends with Grimes during his American exile, and used the poem as a disavowal of the American alienation he'd been required to defend by Auden's libretto for *Poul Bunyan*. But the work as composed turns out not to believe in the possibility of this home-coming. Grimes's efforts to belong to his native society are rebuffed and, rather than accomplishing a reconciliation, the opera is constructed as a contest between his adversary voice and the wailed melody of the chorus. When he consorts with the chorus and joins its song with the public, he does so with frightening excess, turning the cheerily social duet back into an aggrieved



# commentary

(The top line and the sub-text, continued.)

monologue; or else, during the Sunday service, he adds his voice to the chorus only to jeer at its insipid piety and to exclude himself from its benediction: "God have mercy upon me!" At its most extreme, this vocal contest is a dispute over Grimes's name, which means over his identity — does he belong to himself, or to the reproving society? The work begins with the coroner's naming of him: society's denunciation of him as a likely culprit. Near the end, the chorus is mobilized in a deadly, anathematic series of repetitions of that detested name. As if in self-defence, Grimes during his mad scene hubbly names himself a dozen times, clutching at the identity the community has declared confiscate; but his monologue is punctuated by the cries of the chorus, which hunts him by calling "Grimes!" through the fog.

At Covent Garden, *Peter Grimes* receives a stunning and subversive performance. Colin Davis and Jon Vickers capitalize on the violence and psychological disturbance latent in the work — so much so that Britten, far from being grateful for interpreters of such energy and intelligence, disapproved of their treatment of it. Davis and Vickers overrule the composer's timid equivocation and retrieve from the opera meanings it attempts to suppress. The Grimes of Peter Pears was an ineffectual dreamer, beseeching the pity of his fellows; the Grimes of Vickers is a barnstormed prophet, a pathological martyr who defies the community rather than imploring its aid. The society in which Britten's hero originally yearned to attain the salvation of anonymity is now with Davis gauding orchestra and chorus to explosions of homicidal fury — a

lynch mob. Such an interpretation boldly wrests from the work a truth which the composer preferred to believe he hadn't placed there, since it confirms an outflow from which he was seeking to be pardoned (just as in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* he was seeking escape from the carnal enchantments of the wood).

Vickers appropriates the character, and makes of Grimes's querulous pleas a private creed, maintained with forbidding integrity. With his hunched, pacing gait, his caged menace, his paranoid mistrust of civility, Vickers has the courage — which Britten, by his own use of the character, admitted that he lacked — to embrace Grimes's alienation and to pride himself on it. "Alone, all alone," declaimed by Vickers with terrifying power, is a boast as much as a lament. Being true to himself requires him to make an enemy of everyone else, and he volunteers gladly, with those crucified gestures he imports from *Parisi-fal*, for the suffering which is the penalty of this isolation. No wonder the composer was disconcerted: the Grimes of Pears was maddened by society's rejection of him, whereas the Grimes of Vickers sees it as his saintly vocation to reject a society which is unworthy of him. Britten hadn't the fortitude to remain in the wood, or to affront the storms which assail Grimes, but Vickers invites the blasts of the tempest and, when Balstrode urges him to shelter indoors, insists that "here will I stay". Just as Hinkink at Glyndebourne makes audible the sexual delirium which is the buried, covert life of Britten's *Dream*, so Vickers ennobles Grimes by investing him with a strength of will which intimidated the composer.

## Between sock and buskin

By Peter Holland

The Twin Rivals  
The Other Place, Stratford

The last scene of Vanbrugh's *The Provoked Wife* takes place in Sir John Brute's house. In Peter Wood's recent production at the National Theatre the whole scene was moved outdoors; on a stage frothing with clouds of dry ice, actors on roller-skates turned and glided in what was supposedly a frozen landscape of the Thames.

Act 2 of Farquhar's *The Twin Rivals* opens in Hyde Park. In John Caird's production at The Other Place the set is nothing but a geometrical pattern of sixteen wooden cubes. The passing of a coach is marked by an actor clicking together two coconutshells as every-one follows the coach's progress over the stage with an attentive stare. As they walk across the stage, the actors duck under imaginary trees and turn into another of the avenues in the park. Lighting produces a mottled, leafy effect on the stage-floor, but nothing else even gestures towards the conventions of stage realism.

The difference between the two scenes is much more than that between lavishness and thrift. In Peter Wood's view of Vanbrugh, the play was submerged in a mass of detail that oscillated uneasily between a gentification towards the emphasis on realism that marked Bill Gaskill's production of Farquhar for the National at the Old Vic, and a self-congratulatory, chocolate-bar charm. The result was a glossy superficiality that won over the audiences at the expense of ignoring the play. There is very little that is spurious in John Caird's production, even in the extraordinary extravagance of the costumes designed by Uitz. Instead there is an honest belief in the virtues of the play and a refusal to overwhelm it in directorial gluttony.

*The Twin Rivals* is a disturbing and uneasy play. It is not enough to label it as "serious comedy" nor even as "Jonsonian", even though Jonson is a vital influence. As Farquhar suggests in his preface, there is an area that drama can concern itself with that sits awkwardly between comedy and tragedy. His concern is plainly not only to "ridicule folly", a traditional limitation on many of his contemporaries' approach to comedy; "if there be a middle sort of wickedness, too high for the sock and too low for the buskin, is there any reason that it should go un-unished". Though the voices he deals with are potentially tragic, "the persons are not meant for the heroic" so that they "must of necessity drop into comedy".

This carefully controlled transition from one mode to another denies the audience its conventional expectations of comic form and comic business. The frothy posing which we are normally presented with as Restoration comic style is forced to do what it can to make itself relevant to what is going on. When Benjamin Wouldbe, the younger twin, has tricked his way into possession of his dead father's house and money by pretending that his brother has been killed, we are shown his lecherous, self-indulgent, freely-inventive scene, without adding any dialogue, to show the parasites at the rich man's door. The usual outrageous fops are, then, though placed together with real originality from the hints in the text. But all are dressed in the rich white materials that provide most of the aristocratic costumes in the play and the result is a sterility or deathly pallor that makes the whole scene both comic and macabre. All the Restoration comedy has been drained out of the nightmarish scene. At the centre of the production is

Mike Gwilym's performance as Benjamin Wouldbe. Benjamin is not the carefree rake-hero of earlier comedies, but a vicious hunchback who wants money more than almost anything else, except to triumph over his honest, undeformed brother Hermes. At times, Benjamin is almost endearing; frequently he has the fascination of an Iago or a Richard III; almost always, by abrupt transitions of mood, Farquhar stops us from being sure quite what to make of him. In Gwilym's performance Benjamin lives at the edge of his nerves. Jumpy and twitching, playing with his clothes or his frightful wig, he is continually on the edge of hysteria. The occasional tantrums of foot-stamping rage are juxtaposed with an every calmness in which he can sit and chat, perched on a corner of one of the set's boxes, a perfect listener, untroubled and apparently interested in the other's story. Gwilym's hunch is given additional emphasis by his shoes with uneven heel-sizes; he twists and turns, unable to stand straight or still, marching around the stage as he desperately tries to find another way to cheat Hermes.

Benjamin's opening words in the play are an attack on the whole panoply of dressing: "Here is such a plague every morning with buckling shoes, gartering, combing and powdering... Were I an honest brute that rises from his litter, shakes himself and so is dressed I could bear it." But while one of Etherage's rakes, moustache similar to his own, would still have made sure his dress was fastidiously casual, Benjamin never quite fits his clothes, wriggling inside them like an animal that resents the imposition of human habits. A cross between a monkey and performing poodle, Gwilym only once slips into straightforward farce, in his climactic duel with Hermes. Caddishly removing Hermes's spectacles to leave him blinking and stabbing at shadows, he almost wins the duel through purely comic energy. It is dangerously close to an easing of tension when the play seems least to allow it, but there is a sense in which the conclusion is simply comic, trusting in the clichés of comic timing rather than providence to save Hermes and oust Benjamin finally.

Paul Shelley's Richmore is a much more conventional villain, trying to marry his nephew off to his own pregnant mistress, the much talked about but never seen Clelia, or slandering at the prospect of buying an opportunity to rape Aurelia. Richmore's villainy seems more dully and yet more threateningly menacing than Benjamin Wouldbe's. His sexual calculation goes way beyond the range normal in Restoration comedy. We are left in no doubt that Aurelia truly was a minute away from being ruined, not least by the cold efficiency with which her lover, Trueman, checks with Richmore that the rape has not actually been successful. Defeated by Trueman and forced to agree to marry Clelia, Richmore is last shown tearing up Clelia's imploring letter, a fine analogue for Farquhar's curious note in his preface, underlining the "fundamentalism of the play's dialogue by admitting that Richmore never did marry Clelia, "for he was no sooner off the stage but he changed his mind and the poor lady is still in *stark glee*". At moments like these, what seems momentarily like a piece of directorial whimsy is in fact firmly and imaginatively rooted in the complex ironies of the play itself. The play's apparent modernity, in Farquhar's doing, not Caird's.

The third villain is Mrs Mandrake, who has "delivered as many women of great bellies and helped as many to sin as any person in England". Farquhar knew exactly what he was doing when he had Mrs Mandrake played by a man in the first production. This is more than a pantomime device, for Mandrake's over-the-top, her day rejection of any morality and her every omniscience about the affairs of everyone in town

are both comically grotesque and genuinely malevolent. I wish John Caird had tried casting a man in the role. Miriam Karlin is oddly restrained and far too endearing.

Farquhar's other bold stroke in the first production was to have Hermes Wouldbe played by Robert Wilks. Wilks had scored a remarkable triumph as the rake Sir Harry Wildair in Farquhar's *The Constant Couple* three years earlier in 1699. In the long build-up to Hermes's first appearance we are led to expect to find him an attractive and dashing young man like Wildair, honest and virtuous. Instead, Hermes is prissy and dull. His five years of travel round Europe have done nothing to make him less boring. Miles Anderson makes of what is at first sight an unrewarding role a beautifully comic study of the ineffective honest man. Hermes's continual imploring calls on fate, providence and the heavens to help him, his fatuous asides ("Spite of all modesty, a man must own a pleasure in the hearing of his praise") and his misguided belief in his own abilities are carefully added together until he leaves the stage at the end, trying to sum up the play's action into a series of pious and grossly inadequate truisms, talking to Trueman so earnestly that they leave their brides standing.

The characters' energies in *The Twin Rivals* are, then, quite alien to the stock types of the genre. The rake has become an outright villain; the hero is a bore; even the women are less concerned with finding themselves a husband and enjoying the pleasures of the town than with keeping themselves virtuous and safe. It is not surprising in the context of this play, though it would have been extraordinary in a play by Etherage or Wycherley, that Constance's reaction on hearing that Benjamin has designs on her is to plan an escape into the country. Nor is it surprising that this should be ironically juxtaposed with the information gossiped about by Constance earlier in the play, that Clelia is going to Leicestershire, ostensibly to visit friends though in fact to have her baby. London has become a dangerous city and Farquhar's next two plays, *The Recruiting Officer*, and *The Beaux' Stratagem*, turn away from it.

Through doubling of parts, Caird makes his London remarkably densely populated. All the cast, even the principals, are transformed into gentry in park, visitors to the levee, chairmen, constables and even a de-cent-sized mob related by Trueman to save Aurelia. The result is a sense of place that is created without fake realism, a sense of bustle created through inventiveness rather than numbers of extras, and a subtle sense of the interconnections of the various strands of the play through the careful playing of even the smallest roles. There is only one quirky piece of directing. The actors spend some time before the start of the play chatting amongst themselves and with any members of the audience they happen to turn to. Neither the actors nor the audience seem sure of the point of this exercise, which has a specious air of communal experimentalism that jars with the tough intelligence of the rest of the production.

One final word of gratitude. This is a rare production of a Restoration comedy in that it includes both prologue and epilogue. The first, split between the men, and the latter, spoken by the women, work excellently as framing pieces, inviting our participation in the judging of the play's action in a way that involves us far more effectively than the preceding gossiping.

Since *Nicholas Nickleby*, it is easy to equate success with the large-scale enterprise. *The Twin Rivals* gains immeasurably from the scale of The Other Place. I hope that it will not be transferred into a larger theatre, though the RSC has rarely done anything finer.

## Turner and literature

By Lawrence Gowing

Turner and the Sublime  
British Museum

All exhibitions from the Turner Bequest are good. The collection is so rich that however the cake is cut the result is a feast. The interesting question about *Turner and the Sublime*, which has been brought together at the British Museum with contributions from America and a picture from Canada, added to the basis of works from the Bequest, is how far the works and the idea really illuminate each other. The sizeable book by Andrew Wilton, which was reviewed in the *TLS* (January 31) when it was published for the showings in Toronto and New Haven, appears to be about to address itself to this question, without quite doing so.

The questions of what Turner owed to verbal formulation and what he gains from it are distinct. Art as great as this has a conceptual validity residing in words. The gloss that we are sometimes offered to Goya say, or Frickrich, even by the artist himself, is never altogether illuminating. Was the Englishman any more literary than the rest, in fact? In intention he may have been; that has been regarded as one of the most ludicrous things about him. If his poetic preoccupations are now found to be sympathetic and significant, that is an interesting change in the critical climate. If it is a better climate for Turner, it may be a worse one for Constable, who was one of the great letter-writers of his time (which not even John Gage, his admirable recent editor, will claim for Turner) without a hint of verbiage adhering to his painting.

The old labels were too approximate. Constable was supposed to be too strictly visual a painter for such questions to arise at all. In fact it is Turner who has been rehabilitated as a formalist, without the slightest detriment, if he is understood, to his moral and humane preoccupations. Constable, on the other hand, carried intellectual and obsessive baggage that we overlook.

Turner's literary ambitions, such as they were, were still-born. Until lately we have found them merely embarrassing and the question of what he gained from poetry has hardly been studied. Where the Sublime is at issue, the question has been examined even less. What did empirical aesthetics in the eighteenth century take from the visual arts and give to them? Burke conceived his *Enquiry* in the household of Gar-rick, where Hogarth's "Satan, Sin and Death" was hanging, and took his

prime example from the related passages in *Paradise Lost*, yet "in all the pictures I have seen of hell" (and he cannot but have had Hogarth in mind) he seems only to have been left at a loss (which we may admittedly share) "whether the painter did not intend something ludicrous".

The nature of Turner's use of poetry, the mingled dependence on it and ruthlessness with it, is worth study if the elusive, private man is to emerge. For a picture like "Buttermere" Turner wrote a poem, ending "the grand ethereal bow/shoots up immense, and every hue unfolds" we may wonder. Turner's rainbow unfolds no hues at all. It shines silver and colourless in the sky. This is evidently the question that he is at pains not to open, with his period in place of Thomson's comma, so we never hear that the hues in fact unfold "In fair proportion running from the red, / To where the violet fades into the sky." Thomson hurried on to apostrophize "awful Newton" and observe that "the dissolving clouds/ Form fronting on the sun, his showery prism:/ And to the sage-instructed eye, unfold/ The various wine of light, by him disclose'd/ From the white mingling maze." Turner himself was not at this date "sage-instructed", certainly he was far less so than Wright of Derby in 1795, though he was to be later, with a vengeance. He was style-instructed.

Wilton takes the notebook sketch for "Buttermere" as evidence in favour of a naive pre-Comprehension view that Turner "painted what he saw": it appears rather that he painted what the schemata of Rembrandt and J. R. Cozens enabled him to see. Turner's peculiar ways with poetry in 1798 are full of evidence of his thought — and perhaps of his instinct too, when his work was sublime in the most traditional sense. "The dormitory and transept of Fountain's Abbey — Evening", a watercolour which renders a time of day just as "Buttermere" does the weather, takes five maltreated lines out of eight from *Summer* and fillets them in exactly the same way. Again, his audience might wonder what it is that "In circle following circle gathers round/ To close the face of things." No singular noun survives as subject. In fact what gathers round for Thomson is the final depth of shadow, followed

through three progressive stages of fading light. Turner eliminated the comprehensive tonal gradations, which were what his architectural style, whether he perceived it or not, still lacked.

The watercolour of "Norham Castle on the Tweed, Summer's morn" is the most curiously significant case. The exhibition includes a preliminary study for the subject, which was to serve Turner's evolving art for more than forty-five years. The quotation announcing the King of Days suffers the loss of one phrase, and the addition of a syllable in an attempt to repair the scansion. "The lessening cloud/ The kindling azure, and the mountain's brow" in Thomson's *Summer* are "illum'd with fluid gold..." Turner must have known that the fluid gold, which he suppressed in 1798, was then beyond his range. He was prudent to lay it aside, as if for his imagination to work on, because the phrase describes exactly the sublime resource which was to become the essence of his art in late pictures like the oil in the Tate.

To do justice to its theme, the exhibition needs not only the early watercolours and the analysis of the poetic prompting which is missing, but also the oil from the Bequest of "Norham Castle". Andrew Wilton's introduction leaves one doubtful whether the Sublime retains any useful meaning. He records one of Turner's Sublimes, the "Mountainous Sublime", marked on a print, and coins many more, perhaps only half seriously. Starting with the Picturesque Sublime — which already blurs the only distinction of general, though not invariable, usefulness at the time — he proceeds to the Historical Sublime, from which we need to be prevented from averting our eyes. It is a surprise to find with it the Wilkie-type genre-pieces, which must be the Ridiculous Sublime if they qualify at all. Then there is the Architectural Sublime, the Perspectival, Piranesian or Incarceration Sublime, giving a hint of the Bondage Sublime beloved of Rusell, and sublime view-painting, "balancing the demands of topography... with the requirements of High Art." (Is that what the sublimity of "some of the greatest of his late paintings" boils down to?) Some of the categories of grand subject pass in review — sea, lakes, darkness, mountains and so on — followed by the Urban Sublime and, the Suburban too. The Industrial Sublime is plain enough, but what are we to make of the sublimity of literariness and the Realistic Sublime?

Through this rambling survey, Wilton turns from time to time to deal a backhander at the connotation which he likes least, unlikely to be one which was best established in Turner's time. The Burken Sublime, as the antithesis of the Beautiful, the sublimity of "Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain and danger, that is to say whatever is in any sort terrible...". Wilton likes to belittle what he calls "the 'terror' school of sublime theorists" and will have no truck with "the 'distillation of a fear that we cannot really feel'". He makes haste to applaud the later work on the Swiss lakes, where Turner "could dispense altogether with the trappings of horror when he 'avoids the merely theatrical'". We are not even spared the Devout Sublime, despite the lack of evidence. Calling Ruskin in support for "the validity of Christianity", Wilton wholeheartedly backs Charles Kingsley's commendation of "the knowledge that the ideal is neither to be invented or abstracted, in what (among other things) 'lies an honest development of the true idea of Protestantism'".

It is well for history to acclimatize itself to its subject but it cannot afford to go native in the Victorian establishment. The original vitality of landscape painting was faded associated in Turner's respective periods with Lutheran Protestantism in the circle of the Elector of Saxony and with evangelical Romanticism, but never eschewed invention as Kingsley wished. Certainly Turner

did not; one feels here rather far from the ribald old punster's frame of mind.

As the theme for an exhibition or a critical discussion, "Turner and the Sublime" faces difficulties that might have given pause to the prudent. (I share some responsibility as a Trustee of the British Museum when the decision was taken.) Firstly, however we understand the Sublime, and on a serious historical view whatever is in any sort terrible must be near the heart of the meaning. It achieves its summit in Turner's oil paintings, which are outside the print room's range. "We are not moved to terror by paint on paper," the commentary pinned up in the exhibition remarks. One can only answer, so much the worse for paper and the Museum that is restricted to it. In the years after 1809 (when Turner gave up using Thomson as his poetic catspaw) we are undoubtedly moved by paint on canvas, and in "The Fall of an Avalanche in The Grisons" it would seem moved to terror. It is enough to notice that, in the presence of oil paint solidly trowelled in the likeness of rock and snow or brushed obliquely and wetly down with the storm, we are moved to belief. The intrinsic reality of the print is so unmistakable that we have to credit the actuality and the human consequence of what is happening — in the studio and on the mountain. When the weather over Wharfedale, seen from Farnley (but painted as it from the Chevin, with rocks that still stand) produces "Snow Storm — Hannibal Crossing the Alps", we are in no doubt that in paint and art the whole compound theme has indeed become in some sort terrible; the dilemma of the distinction between the object and the sensation, a favourite of Wilton's, has ceased to exist. Turner liberates the eighteenth century from its philosophical and stylistic coils, which is why we recognize him as modern.

The critical debate is vitiated by the fact that the terminology resists definition. It is certain that the experience of what is formidable in nature, and the spectacle of catastrophe (an engagement that never gets its due in Wilton's *blen pensant* Anglican Sublime), perhaps by way of the imagery of menace and fear, led to a sense of totality, involvement and envelopment, which is felt wherever the extent is infinite, at sea or on land or simply in light, and recognized as an emotional extremity that is both private and universal. But this is the point, where the relevance of the Sublime is undoubted, that the expressions of oceanic flux are themselves in flux and the received formulations, verbal and pictorial, become no more than incidental. They were surely felt by Turner to be so.

It is surprising that any historian should deal with this issue without so much as mentioning the occasion on which Turner discussed it. It was in 1809, when his thought was turning that way, that he filled a page in the Cockermouth sketchbook which the critic can hardly miss without appearing positively to suppress it: "Speaking of the sublime," Turner wrote,

Tom Paine, who we may reasonably conclude to be destitute of all delicacy of refined taste, yet has conveyed a tolerable definition of the sublime, as it is probably experienced by ordinary or uncultivated minds, and even by acute and judicious without the vigour of imagination, says that the sublime and the ridiculous are often so nearly related that it is difficult to class them separately. One step above the sublime becomes ridiculous and one step above the ridiculous makes the sublime again.

So much for the validity of Christianity; Turner had read three-quarters of the way through *The Age of Reason* before, deep in the doubts about Joshua, he came on the sentence, recalled to him passages in Payne Knight's *Analytical Enquiry*, the spearhead of the Picturesque attack, and in Reynolds's last Discourse, which he heard him deliver, Reynolds was still in his mind while he went on to

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سكنا في الأصل



## commentary

one of his dumbfounding poems:  
The beard of Hadubras and the hard of  
Gray  
The spinning of the earth round her soft  
axe.  
Ample room and verge enough  
So nearly touch the wounds of all we hate.

The passage in the final Discourse, in which Reynolds took Michelangelo as his text for the advice that the imitation of sublimity was always dangerous and sometimes ridiculous (Payne, Knight wrote that the ridiculous seemed "all ways to be lying in wait on the extreme verge of the sublime"), had reminded Turner of sentences in the Fourth Discourse on the same theme. Discussing Correggio and Parmigianino, who "dignified the gentleness of modern effeminacy" (the Discourses are full of pearls), Reynolds observed that "they often boldly drive on to the very edge of ridicule" (noting "it is the peculiar characteristic of men of genius to be afraid of coldness... it was exactly the fear that was haughty Delacroix, genius of the sublimity of violence"). Reynolds proceeded to adapt a quotation from Pope: "Strange graces still, and stranger flights they had". He was amusingly comparing the two mannerists to the Lady in the *Moral Essays* who "was just not ugly, and was just not mad" though he prudently skipped the line, and continued "Yet ne'er so sure our passion to create/As when they touched the brink of all we hate." Turner did not hate the ridiculous; he emulated the comic expression of Rembrandt long before he realized the relevance of Rembrandt's style to his. The elements in the Sublime that provoked him to something approaching hatred were the schematic, typified by Hogarth's ludicrously

square-cut puritan beard; the melodramatic, represented by "The Bard"; and apparently the cosmic, for which the inaudible rotation of the earth on its axis seems to stand (until someone detects another buried reference).

None of this private commencing of Turner with himself and with his reading, his memories and his robust native sense, enters Wilton's discussion; virtually nothing of this informal, literate tenor in the art and thought of the time, which is so relevant to his theme, emerges. Any slice of Turner is richly informing, and Wilton has such a splendid eye and memory for the watercolours that one finds, in every exhibition he does, many things that one is grateful for. I should guess that what he is interested in is the eloquence of the works themselves, rather than the critical debate. He does not seem aware of its ebb and flow in the vital years ending around 1810, and he has no talent for *belles lettres*. It would not excite him, one feels, to realize that he was present at the invention of modern landscape art, which is modern art *tout court*. Instead we have pages aimed at the original American audience - about Mayall, and about the Hudson River Sublime, a notion that is exactly wrong to interpret what was great rather than large about those painters.

Everyone should go to the Print Room and decide afresh on the standing and significance of Turner's work on paper. I am myself deeply fearful of the habit of the widespread exhibiting of these great masterpieces. I have some responsibility for the growth of it since 1966, and inspection does not convince me that the watercolours shown then in New York, and often since, have been wholly unaffected. It

may be that reducing the intensity of light increases the length of time it will take for exhibition to harm a watercolour; I know no evidence that it will eliminate eventual damage and postponing the fate must not reconcile us to it. It may be, as I have written and said, that watercolours should not be regarded as works for exhibition, so much as works for recital, like chamber music, to be available only at certain hours on certain days; the two media, in the institutionalized forms that we cherish, two public manifestations of private arts, date from exactly the same time, the years of Solomon's concerts in the Hanover Square Rooms. This worry must be faced and set at rest. Quite soon, with the building of the new gallery for the Turner Bequest, it will be necessary to decide where the works on paper in the Bequest are to be lodged. This difficult decision will rest with the Trustees of the National Gallery.

I urge them, in particular, to see this exhibition, both to familiarize themselves with the admirable conditions in which these works are kept and shown at the British Museum - nothing less will serve the case - and to consider most seriously the context in which they are in future to be seen. The exhibition convinces me, rather against my will, that this achievement should be placed where it can most readily be seen in relation to the work which completes it and crowns it, the work in oil paint. *Turner and the Sublime* does an unexpected and unintended service. It demonstrates that neither part of his work yields its full meaning and its real sublimity without the other. Only together is the artist's true stature apparent.



A detail from a page of Leonardo da Vinci. The drawing is in an exhibition opening at the Royal Academy on July 11, selected from the Leonardo nature studies in the Royal Library at Windsor Castle, and his scientific manuscript the Codex Hammer (formerly the Codex Leicester).

## Among this week's contributors

JOHN BECKWITH was Keeper of the Department of Architecture and Sculpture at the Victoria and Albert Museum from 1974 to 1979.

C. W. E. BLOSSY is the editor of *The Second Black Renaissance: Essays in Black Literature*, 1981.

WILFRID BLUNT's most recent book is *In for a Penny: A Prospect of Kew Gardens*, 1978.

BRIAN BOND's most recent book is *British Military Policy Between the Two World Wars*, 1980.

PETER CONRAD's books include *Romantic Opera and Literary Form*, 1977, and *Imagining America*, 1980.

MARISE CREMONA is a lecturer in Law at the City of London Polytechnic.

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RAYMOND DAWSON's books include *Imperial China*, 1972.

DENNIS DUNCANSON is Reader in South-East Asian Studies at the University of Kent.

D. J. ENRIGHT is the editor of *The Oxford Book of Contemporary Verse 1945-1980*, 1980.

PHILIP GARDNER is co-author of *The God Approach: A Commentary on the Poems of William Empson*, 1978.

LAWRENCE GOWING is Slade Professor of Fine Art at University College London. His books include *Turner: Imagination and Reality*, 1966.

GEORFFREY GRIGSON's most recent collection of poems, *The Fleets*, was published last year.

ROBERT HALSBAND's most recent book is *The Raps of the Lock and Its Illustrations 1714-1890*, 1980.

RICHARD HARRIS writes on Asian affairs for *The Times*.

PETER HOLLAND's *The Ornament of Action: Text and Performance in Restoration Comedy* was published in 1979.

IRVING HUNT is a Fellow of King's College, Cambridge. He is co-editor of *Wealth and Virtue: the Shaping of Political Economy in the Scottish Enlightenment* to be published shortly by Cambridge University Press.

DALE IDRENS is Curator of Ethnography at The Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh.

DOUGLAS JOHNSON is Professor of French History at University College London. His books include *A Concise History of France*, 1970.

DAVID LODGE's most recent novel is *How Far Can You Go?*, 1980. His *Working With Structuralism* was published earlier this year.

GEORGE MACBETH's most recent book is *Poems of Love and Death*, 1980. PATRICK MCCARTHY is the author of *Celine*, 1975.

ROBERT BERNARD MARTIN's *Tennyson, the Unquiet Heart*, 1980, has been awarded the Duff Cooper and the James Tait Black Prizes and the Royal Society of Literature's Award.

SIMONA PAKENHAM's books include *Piglets and Pernod*, 1962, and *Sixty Miles from England*, 1967.

GEORFFREY PARKER's books include *Philip II 1578*, and *Spain and the Netherlands and Europe in Crisis 1598-1648*, both 1979.

DAVID PRYCE-JONES is the author of *Unlucky Myford: A Quest*, 1976.

D. D. RAHABLI's books include *Problems of Political Philosophy*, 1970.

SR JAMES RICHARDS was Editor of *The Architectural Review* from 1937 to 1971.

CLAUDE RAWSON's books include *Profiles in Literature: Henry Fielding, 1669, and Gulliver and the Gentle Reader: Studies in Swift and Our Times*, 1973.

ROBIN ROBBINS is a lecturer in English at the University of Sheffield.

NESTA ROBERTS is the author of *The Face of France*, 1976.

MICHAEL SOMMERELL is writing a biography of Alexander Solzhenitsyn.

JON SILKIN's most recent collection of poems is *Psalm and their Spoils*, 1980.

GILLIAN SUTHERLAND is the author of *Policy-Making in Elementary Education 1870-1895*, 1973.

CLAIRE TOMALIN is Literary Editor of *The Sunday Times*. Her most recent book is *Shelley and His World*, 1980.

JENNIFER UOLOW is the editor of *Essays on Literature and Art* by Walter Pater, 1975.

J. R. VINCENT is Professor of Modern History at the University of Bristol.

STEPHEN WALL is a Fellow of Keble College, Oxford, and editor of *Keble in Criticism*.

STANLEY WELLS is General Editor of the Oxford Shakespeare.

## 'The Kornilov Affair'

Sir, - Since George Katkov is the author of *Russia 1917: The Kornilov Affair* he may care to comment on Patrick Flaherty's analysis (Letters, July 3) of Kornilov's character and intentions (based, it would seem, on one source only). I am responsible merely for the review (May 15). Mr Flaherty's strictures, in so far as they are directed at me, are three-fold: first, that Dr Katkov and I have made Kornilov into an "avuncular figure", "a Bonnie Prince Charlie" and even "an eagle"; second, that my review indulges in "apologetics for a military dictatorship"; and third, that my use of historical evidence was "careless" in presenting "without caveat Savinkov's message to Kornilov authorizing a military coup to pre-empt an anticipated Bolshevik uprising". Mr Flaherty thinks I should have stated (whether or not, apparently, such a statement is found in the book reviewed) that a Bolshevik uprising was "very unlikely".

The first point is, unfortunately, too general to answer except by an equally general assertion that none of these epithets corresponds to my idea of Kornilov and I doubt if any of them correspond to Dr Katkov's. Certainly neither his book nor my review of it should convey the impression that they do. I am at a loss to understand the second point since my review does not involve my own attitude to any form of government. Instead, it quotes Lenin's and Trotsky's view that the choice lay between Kornilov's victory and that of the Bolsheviks. Since my own preference is irrelevant, I neither stated it nor implied it.

The "caveat" would have been pointless. My point was not whether Savinkov was justified in authorizing Kornilov to pre-empt a Bolshevik uprising, but whether Kornilov's action constituted a mutiny. It is my (and Dr Katkov's) case that it did not constitute a mutiny since, quite irrespective of a Bolshevik uprising's likelihood or otherwise, Kornilov was given a direct order by his Prime Minister/War Minister (Kerensky) and his acting War Minister (Savinkov) to march on Petrograd. To disobey that order would, indeed, have been mutiny which could have developed into a "coup". Whatever my own view regarding the likelihood of a Bolshevik insurrection, it certainly did not seem as unlikely to contemporaries in 1917 as it now does to Mr Flaherty. Therefore, to accuse Kerensky and Savinkov of acting in bad faith in issuing that order is, to my mind, not entirely fair. Kerensky can be accused of bad faith only in acting later as if he had not issued it.

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## The Mandelstam Conference

Sir, - In his account of the Oslip Mandelstam Conference at the recent Cambridge Poetry Festival (Commentary, June 19) Henry Gifford refers to the forum on translating Mandelstam. Besides Professor Gifford, the chairmen, and Joseph Brodsky, the panel included David McDuff, Bernard Meares and Peter Russell, all of whom have translated Mandelstam. As Professor Gifford says, the proceedings were dominated by Joseph Brodsky. He then takes himself to task for allowing Brodsky's discourse to be interrupted by members of the audience, for allowing "an experience not unlike overhearing Coleridge to be exchanged for what amounted to a talk-in", concluding that "participation is the cry of the hour". I would like simply to point out in the face of this emotive phrase that the event in question was billed as a translation "forum" with contributions from etc. etc. The suggestion surely was that it was a kind of open translation workshop. Had the organizers wished it to be a lecture by Joseph Brodsky on Mandelstam in

general, then presumably they would have indicated this.

As a participant in the Cambridge Poetry Festival who was invited to take part in this forum and who, on declining (since I have not myself translated more than a handful of Mandelstam poems), was urged, as a translator, to make contributions from the floor, I rather resent Professor Gifford's remark that "some of the audience became restive" half-way through Brodsky's "performance". Some real (at least to me) issues were raised by two or three members of the audience and if "many of the audience felt cheated" - only one protested, as far as I can recall - I would suggest that this was their problem, since what we were supposedly attending was a discussion, not a star turn.

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## Marxism and the Law

Sir, - In his review, "Demythologizing the law" (May 1), Eugene Kamenka distinguishes (among others) two Western views of law, the non-radical or judicial view and the ideological or "radical Western" view. According to the first, law is both internally "coherent" (with its own theory, system, tradition, history) and externally "adherent" (with social ties that link it to the concerns and needs of the community). According to the ideological, "radical Western" view, however, law in English-speaking countries is neither self-sustaining in itself nor reformative socially, but by and large bespeaks and serves the political, economic, society interests of the "ruling class".

Unfortunately, in America these disparate, seemingly incongruous conceptions of law are not always distinguished into mutually exclusive, essentially irreconcilable categories of radical and non-radical thought; and this is so precisely because elected but also appointed government officials, including justices of the Supreme Court, are sensitive to and indeed often in sympathy with the concerns and needs of those who have voted for the presidential incumbent, presumably after finding in his political platform a predilection for their own political, economic, society interests.

Elements of either conception of law, for example, underlie Chief Justice Warren Earl Burger's comments, first in an interview for the *New York Times* (July 4, 1971), later in a speech at Georgetown University (September 17, 1971), on the conservative direction of the "Nixon-Burger" Court or, more exactly, on the relative strengths of Congress and the courts as agencies of social change. Arguing that in a "like ours" "like ours" the making of "basic" changes is a legislative and policy process, part of the political process, that the source of social progress lies in "constitutional guarantees" and "specific statutes" passed by Congress, Justice Burger cautioned Americans not to look to the courts for social reform. "The courts have a very limited role in that respect," he declared, "and it consists mainly in applying (not interpreting) the articles of the Constitution and the laws to existing situations not previously brought before the courts". Credit for social change, probably speaking solely due to judges, belongs therefore largely to "legislation flowing from the political process", barely to the "litigation process", which is, or in 1971, Justice Burger said it was, "a slow, painful, and often clumsy instrument of progress, unless one is content to measure progress in terms of generations and centuries".

Three elements of thought that underlie these comments pertain to either the judicial or the "radical Western" view of law. The first element, which pertains to the judicial view, is internal adherence. There can be little doubt that law for Justice Burger is a distinct discipline with methods, purposes, and resources that other fields, including the political and social studies, do not share; doubtless, too, law has its own tradition, which

Justice Burger, a strict constructionist, apparently associates, in his comments, with the wording of the Constitution and the statutes. The second element, which also pertains to the judicial view, is external coherence. Justice Burger, of course, fails to establish any clear link between law and sociology; the link, if it exists, remains unexplored and seemingly unknown ("No one really understands what we ought to do with the delinquents and misfits of society", said the Justice at Georgetown University). Yet the underlying, assumptive thought about methods, purposes, tradition, and so on, points to a legal doctrine according to which law should powerfully strengthen its link with individuals like those who in 1971, conformably with their special interests, resisted social change and approved the over-all conservative domestic policies of the presidential incumbent. The third and last element, which alone pertains to the "radical Western" view, is social reformism. Clearly, a legal doctrine that asserts the non-interdisciplinary nature of law, that prescribes a strengthening of the link between law and the proprietary, monetary classes and interests of a society does not at the same time envisage law as a principal medium through which social change and progress ought to be allowed to flow.

If my reading of these comments is correct, the following observation will not be out of place. With respect to at least one English-speaking country, Eugene Kamenka's division of legal concepts into modes of radical and non-radical thought may be in need of considerable modification. At any rate, in 1971 Justice Burger seems to have assumed between law and social change a relation that contains one or more elements from either the judicial or the "radical Western" view of law. But unlike the proponents of the "radical" view, the Justice appears to have accepted and indirectly defended vigorously the thesis that law has a carefully restricted role to play in the reshaping of existing disturbed, partly degenerate, unhealthy society. In the wide democratic net lies the great authoritarian fish - still struggling.

ERNEST BLANK.  
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## Steeplechasing

Sir, - Your reviewer J. Mordaunt Crook (June 19) writes that Thomas M. Disch and Charles Naylor, the authors of *Neighbouring Lives*, "have a nice ear for period dialogue". Example: "Picture galleries, Browning sniffs, 'are an insult to any sensitive mind. Paintings should be seen... one by one... not ranged like so many hurdles in some mental steeplechase'."

This being attributed to a person as well-known as Browning, and to whom, as a poet, simile has special meaning, the reader is faced with the thought that the author's intention is to present Browning as an unknowledgeable ass; Or is it a case of reviewer and authors being unaware that hurdles have no place in a steeplechase?

TILLY MARSHALL.  
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## W. E. Midwinter

Sir, - W. E. Midwinter (1851-1890) was quite certainly not the first Test cricketer to die, as Peter Sutcliffe states in his review of Eric Midwinter's *W. G. Grace: His Life and Times* (June 26). A quick check reveals that I. Southey and G. F. Grace both died in 1890, nearly seven years before Midwinter played his last Test; that H. R. J. Charlwood died in 1888; and that A. Greenwood and H. Jupp died in 1889. I have missed one or two more.

HUMPHREY CLUCAS.  
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## 'Mao'

Sir, - Lack of space and other editorial reasons unfortunately prevented the TLS from reproducing the references which accompanied all my quotations from Ross Terrill's works (March 6). Since Mr Terrill (Letters, June 5) seems to have forgotten many of the things he wrote (we can understand why) it will be my pleasure to provide him (or any interested reader) with these references.

I quoted Mr Terrill: "We are not proponents, but admirers of the Chinese revolution". Actually his original version was: "We are certainly not Maoists. We admire [my emphasis] the Chinese revolution". I fail to see in what way the first statement (even though it is incorrectly worded) substantially differs from the second. Since the reality of Mr Terrill's admiration for the Maoist regime is not in doubt, it seems to me that the main question is not whether this admiration was originally expressed with a noun or with a verb, but whether such an admiration is a sentiment compatible with common sense and common decency. I wish Mr Terrill had addressed himself to this latter issue (which was also the topic of my article). Instead he chose to fill one entire page of the TLS with various observations on the number of weeks he spent in China (seven - not six), on the sales figures of his book (25,000 copies - but not a best-seller), on the actual size of his book (83,000 words - not a huge book) and on the diseased state of Lays's psyche (very bitter and frustrated). All these observations may well be accurate; they are hardly interesting, as they can be of concern only to Terrill's publishers, or to Lays's wretched relatives (who have to bear with him every day!).

However, Mr Terrill's letter provided a useful complement to my portrait of the China Expert. He makes two points which are absolutely correct and worth noting: unlike the common layman who learns all about China in one visit of six weeks, the Expert does it in seven weeks; and an Expert's authority, to be valid, should have been vouchsafed by Professor Edward Friedman, Professor Jonathan Spence, Professor J. K. Fairbank and *The Fort Worth Star Telegram*.

The events which Professor Friedman belatedly discovered with shocked amazement in 1980 had been analysed much earlier by a number of leading scholars, such as L. La Dany (1970), Jürgen Dönitz (1972), Ivan and Miriam London (1977). It is nice to hear about Professor Friedman's "attitude of openness to learning more about these horrors" (Letters, June 12); with such a positive attitude, all he needs now is just to find (at last!) the way to his university's library.

SIMON LEYS.  
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## Carlyle

Sir, - Hugh Trevor-Roper correctly says that Carlyle thought Cromwell "had no equivalent in modern politics" (June 26). But for a short period Carlyle seems to have recognized in Peel the potentialities of a heroic leader. According to Froude, after the repeal of the Corn Laws he "discovered Peel to be a real man" and sent him a copy of *Cromwell*. In his accompanying letter of June 18, 1846, Carlyle hoped that the book would have interest for him and perhaps also "have admonition, exhortation, in various ways instruction and encouragement, for yet other labours which England, in a voiceless but most impressive manner, still expects and demands of you". After he formally met Peel for the first time at Bath House on March 27, 1848, he wrote in his Journal: "I consider him by far our first public man - which indeed is saying little - and hope that England in these frightful times may still get some good of him." And in the *Letter-Day Pamphlets* he reiterated that hope, with less reservation, much less awe. Peel was the only man able to produce "a real

Management, no longer an imaginary one, of our affairs". Shortly afterwards, "Peel's" untimely, accidental death, vividly described in Carlyle's Journal, left him with "no definite hope of peacable improvement for this country". Jane Carlyle wrote that he mourned over Peel as she had never seen him mourn before.

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## 'The Standing of Psychoanalysis'

Sir, - How pleased B.A. Farrell will be with Anthony Clare's review of his book on *The Standing of Psychoanalysis* (June 16) will perhaps depend on the weight he gives to Clare's reproach that "his lack of familiarity with the clinical situation is a serious handicap to his attempt to understand the true position".

Farrell made a comment in another context which is relevant here. He said of a writer he was criticizing (his "Comment" in *Explanation in the Behavioural Sciences*, eds R. Boerger and F. Cioffi, 1975, Cambridge, p. 501): "When we set out to examine the theory and procedures advocated by a certain figure in the past, the first thing we have to do is to put on the robes of the historian, and consider his work with scholarly detachment and rigour". Farrell's further comment is especially applicable to Dr Clare's review: "His tone is polemical throughout, and he simply does not do justice to various important aspects of Freud's work before he plunges into criticism of it".

Dr Clare aims to persuade that Farrell is wrong on clinical grounds when he "wants psychoanalysis to come out of the exploration reasonably well". I write to indicate that Dr Clare does not speak for all psychiatrists in his belligerent remonstrance.

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## A Proustian Rainbow

Sir, - It is unjust of Robert M. Adams to complain (June 12) that Terence Kilmarin's rendering of Proust's "ébauches d'arc-en-ciel" as "iridescence" fails to represent the Proustian rainbow. The primary meaning of "iridescence" is, of course, "the quality of displaying colours like those of a rainbow": the word derives from "iris", the rainbow's name in both Latin and Greek.

A. J. HOLLIN.  
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## The Private Case

Sir, - The Keeper of Manuscripts at the British Library says that there is no "Private Case" in his department (Letters, June 12). Many readers know that some manuscripts there have been "Reserved from public use". If this is still so, it surely comes to the same thing.

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*Eleven British Poets*, edited by Michael Schmidt (reviewed in the TLS of March 13), is also published by Methuen in paperback at £3.95.

*The World's Great News Photos* is published by "Columbus Books" at £8.95 and not by Crown, as stated in the TLS of May 13.

مكتبة الأصل



## From suburb to suburb

By Jennifer Uglow

JANET FRAME:  
Living in the Maniototo  
240pp. The Women's Press. £3.25.  
0 7043 3867 X

Living in the Maniototo is an absorbing and disconcerting novel. The title refers to the dwelling place of a New Zealand writer revered by the heroine — "a high plain, they were told, in Central Otago — you know, where the air is known to be rare, where apricots grow, and there's a scheme to drown the land and the towns . . . didn't it mean a plain of blood after the battles fought there? But wasn't it also a place where patients went to be cured of their sicknesses?" Mavis, the central character, is a writer and the novel's theme appears at first to be the problems of writing, until one realizes that creating a story is simply one of many ways people build up fictions about their lives. Thus Mavis Barnwell, a middle-aged woman who can instantly identify herself to strangers in a bus queue with the resounding phrase "I've buried two husbands you know", is also Violet Pansy Proudlock, ventriloquist, and Alice Thumbo, eavesdropper and novelist, "a replica of the imagined, twice removed from the real".

Mavis moves from Blenheim, a peaceful Auckland suburb whose streets all have martial names, to its "twin" sister Berkeley, California, where she has been invited to stay in a house while the owners are away in Italy. She is visited there by two couples, Roger and Dora, and Zita and Theo. As she writes in her study, the quartet play out the game of the Great Californian Confession, and reveal to her their childhood fears, their various-

ly formulated aspirations, and their ideal personae: respectively, hero, home-maker, refugee, and rescuer. We also see Mavis, on her way from New Zealand to California, staying with another expatriate, Brian, in Baltimore, a Gothic city of poverty and menace. Here, too, people cherish illusion, like the cleaning lady Mrs Tyndall, who waits for phone calls from the radio station and gives her savings to faith healers, or Lonnie, Brian's errant nephew from New Zealand, who refuses to see "the real USA" but watches television and steals some silver dollars, symbols of the fictive America.

Some years later, from her home in Taranaki (the author's own home at the time of writing) Mavis pieces together her feelings about these events, turned into poetry and prose in her private writings, "the Manifesto".

The novel is, in part, a saga in which figure after figure is jolted into confronting their "true self". But the book's real concern is with the inexactitude of all our attempts at description and definition, the frustrating, mysterious equivalence between language and its object, between interpreted history and "reality", between original and replica. Parallel to this interest in communication is a preoccupation with response, and this is emphasized in the opening words of the titles to each of the book's sections — "Naming", "Paying", "Attention", "Avoiding". Janet Frame involves her readers in these concerns by making the novel itself into a test or demonstration. She uses the "I-book" form, the mock-autobiography which her heroine specifically objects to on the grounds that it makes too many emotional demands; and within the novel we find "real" people (husbands, friends, children) and characters who are just "fictions" of Mavis/Alice/Violet's imagination. All are equally roundly characterized and thus force

the reader to ask: given that the whole novel is a fiction, which people are we to believe in? There is an element of playfulness in *Living in the Maniototo* but the underlying feeling is serious, for it raises important questions about culture and communication.

The deceit of reality is a theme of all Janet Frame's work, the best known example being the evocation of madness, and of the fear which it instils in the sane, in *Faces in the Water* (1961). The direct, emotional tone of that earlier work is replaced here by a densely textured prose which moves unerringly between description and abstraction. Each setting, climate or object is endowed with such solidity that it can join all the "ideal tables" which Mavis associates with Victorian realist novels. Yet although we feel "the shivering ache of being in touch with fiction, a world once vanished and newly imagined", we are always shown the illusion, the ventriloquist's talking stick. The book is almost choked by imagery which deliberately calls attention to this. It employs persistent metaphors of twins, doubles and replicas, and it explores many aspects of language: the magic power of naming; the difficulty of learning; the enduring "foreignness" of second languages; the panic of loss when a stroke affects the speech and creates a chasm between thought and word. The casualties are many: Brian runs a dyslexia clinic, and there are also references to children who suffer the medieval madness of lycanthropy and whose language has been replaced by howls and whimpers.

*Living in the Maniototo* was published in New Zealand in 1979 and won the Fiction Prize in last year's Book Awards there. In her own country and in America Janet Frame has long been acclaimed as a powerful and original writer. It is frustrating that only two of her ten novels should currently have a British publisher.

## Neither black nor white

By Heather Lawton

NICOLE WARD JOUVE:  
Shades of Grey  
176pp. Virago. £7.95 (paperback £2.95).  
0 86068 228 5

*Shades of Grey*, a collection of seven short stories, was first published in France, and has now been translated into English by the author herself, the writer and academic Nicole Ward Jouve. The central characters are women, mostly married, and the stories show flashes of their very different lives: one is in an English maternity ward, one on a bus heading for Alaska, one hobbling (leg in plaster) on a Paris metro, another hire-purchasing twin-beds in a British department store. What they share is the lonely struggle to survive in a bleak world. As the title and epigraph of the book suggest ("I know neither black nor white; only shades of grey"), the line Ward Jouve draws between happiness and despair is a fine one. Thus a mother's joy at the birth of her child in "Forcibly Birth" is brisily dispelled by a military-type matron: "Shattered are the shadows, E's happiness lies in fragments about her bed. Carved up into squares of green and beige linoleum like the floor of this over-crowded room, jangling to the tune of the twitching curtains. . .". Like Jean Rhys, Nicole Ward Jouve can turn the wry comic into the ironically tragic within a sentence.

The style is concentrated — at times having a density and compression which flies closer to poetry than to prose. Ward Jouve makes much of the colours in her title, epigraph and dust-jacket: skies are "iron-grey", pain "ink-black", sexual frigidity "white and dry as paper", a white snowscape is "coloured by the first moments of dusk". In the earlier stories "Forcibly Birth", for example, where one reads of a mother and baby crying ("Cry, both cry, exposed to this grey day into which you've been dragged with forceps") — this perpetual play on the colour grey succeeds. However, Ms Ward Jouve tends to overwork this technique, so that when in a later story a woman's depression is yet again reflected by the weather ("The

day was grey: rooks could be heard croaking, like gaping holes in the neighbouring oak grove") the image has less impact.

Ward Jouve's writing succeeds best when the symbolism is underplayed. In "The Immaculate Conception" she brilliantly conveys a woman's mental breakdown (it follows a still-born child and four miscarriages) by describing her increasingly manic obsession with order and cleanliness. The woman's need to scrub, scour and wash away every stain and grey spot of dirt reaches a climax when even the visits of the priest (the only person she still has contact with) become unbearable:

His cassock was always dirty, with greasy patches showing on the black, shiny at the elbows from constant rubbing, he sputtered as he spoke, the pores of his jaws sprouted with black stubble. . . . Ashes would drop from his cigarette as he failed to notice the ash-tray, a grey cloud sprayed over his cassock, and he brushed it away with his careless cuff on to the carpet. Well might he speak of God, this dirt spray, this volcano of spite and ash.

The story conveys emotion and madness by sticking closely to physical detail and objects rather than through trying to get inside its character.

Ms Ward Jouve is less successful when her writing becomes more experimental and abstract, moving as she does in the last two stories, "First Donator: The Wheel" and "Second Donator: The Drawer", towards a stream of consciousness technique. Here the language becomes increasingly frenzied so as to mirror the frenzy of the central character: "Her soul so overflows with unspeakable resentment that she strains towards a proposition which in the world of Being does not exist, can only repeat itself again and again, the tap-tap of the cardiac pump, the tic-tac of the alarm clock that's about to ring, Christmas that will soon be round yet again. . . . And so on, the words fragmenting and the sentence structure breaking down. The experiment is admirable, but the execution a failure.

For the most part, however, the stories work well. It is good to read a volume by a woman about women which can be considered "feminist", but which resists that easy label.

## Ovidian pursuits

By Mark Abley

JAY PARINI:  
The Love Run  
220pp. Hutchinson. £5.95.  
0 316 69065 1

Some writers are born bad, some achieve badness, and some have badness thrust upon them. *The Love Run* is a bad enough novel to raise interesting questions, for its author, Jay Parini, is a poet, editor and critic of some distinction. He also teaches creative writing at Dartmouth College in New England, the setting of this book. Here is its heroine, Maisie Danston, in the grip of a revelation: "The problems that had appeared so maddening earlier in the night receded into the broader prospect of her life as glimpsed here and now. She walked on to Burr's fraternity house in a fresh glow of new strength." Abstract, clichéd, clumsy and unimaginative, such prose is typical of *The Love Run*. What has gone wrong, and why?

*The Love Run* has as its epigraph a passage from Book One of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* describing Apollo's pursuit of a frightened Daphne, and much of the novel is an American retelling of that myth. The part of Daphne, young, beautiful and long-haired, is taken by Maisie Danston, the daughter of a Boston executive, a girl who floats effortlessly through a funny life. Her boyfriend, an ambitious podcaster called Burr, has the physical grace of Apollo, but the

maniacal passion of the god animates an unemployed working-class youth called Teddy Leskovitch who follows Maisie slavishly, even to the point of kidnapping. Parini is concerned to emphasize, in the hedonistic context of a shining summer, the obsessive force of love, its unreasoning passion of mind and body. Although Teddy's passion is futile, it succeeds in shocking its target into a deeper understanding.

Such a plot could have provided the framework of a compelling tale, but Parini's weaknesses as a storyteller blend with what one assumes to be the demands and expectations of his publisher and his intended audience to create a dismal tale. *The Love Run* is regularly irrigated by sex scenes, at which the author shows no great originality, whereas his evocations of the natural world (the source of much of his best poetry) are kept strictly to a minimum. The conversations are inane (these characters say things to each other like "There's no evidence that historical materialism has any basis in reality"), and "I like you because you are a beautiful woman", and Parini is unable to transfer the occasional intensity of his ideas into the narrative; the need to write a "readable" novel precludes any such boldness. Furthermore, the characters are desperately predictable, as if, before the author began to write, he had made a brief list of their physical characteristics and behaviour patterns from which he never looked up. Parini's examination of love rarely rises above the level established by that other retailer of Ivy League romance, Erich Segal.

## Facts, fictions and fact-fictions

By Claude Rawson

CUSHING STROUT:  
The Veracious Imagination  
Essays on American History,  
Literature and Biography  
301pp. Middletown, Connecticut:  
Wesleyan University Press. \$22.75.  
0 8195 5048 5

When Mr Haley the slave-trader in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* complacently asserts that the niggers are dying "to a fast . . . what with the 'climating and one thing and another, they dies so to keep the market up pretty brisk", he sounds, not for the first time, like Swift's Modest Proposer on the Irish poor: "they are every day dying, and rotting, by Cold and Famine, and Filth, and Vermin, as fast as can be reasonably expected". Both are convinced that in the commercial disposal of human flesh "humanity" pays better than cruelty: "I'm never noways cruel" says Mr Haley, and the Proposer likewise shrinks from anything "bordering upon Cruelty". Both men are interested in how best to fatten and maximize the profitability of their product, both talk in similar ways of human beings as property and as cattle.

The parallels are so frequent that it is hard to believe that Mrs Stowe was not in some half-remembered way translating Swift's pamphlet about the Irish poor into a novel about Negro slaves. She did not altogether admire Swift, though she evidently knew his work, and in a rare and fortuitously apt reference to him in her fiction she likens the story of the elderly hero of *A Minister's Wooing*, an abolitionist clergyman who preaches against "race in the human species", to that of Cadogan (*decanus* or dean), the autobiographical hero of one of Swift's best-known poems.

Mrs Stowe's ironies about the sale of persons, their treatment as animals or things, to be measured, managed, advertised and sold, have of course a factual source that is stranger than fiction, in those slave-auction advertisements and texts and acts of the slave-trade which she herself documents very fully in the *Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin*, a work as long as the novel itself and concerned with the detailed factual validation of a fiction whose "veracity" had been impugned. In other words, the point at which her novel is most directly rooted in historical fact is also where it most closely resembles an extravagantly "non-realistic" satirical fantasy whose surface-truth few readers would ever be likely to think of as inviting any sort of literal credence.

Cushing Strout's *The Veracious Imagination* (the title comes from George Eliot) is pervasively concerned with the interactions of fiction and historical fact. It has an essay on *Uncle Tom's Cabin* which, oddly, says nothing about the *Key*, though it does say that Mrs Stowe relied on "documentary accounts" and first-hand knowledge. Strout's special contribution is to relate the novel to a double tradition of American millenarianism (to whose bearing on American fiction he devotes three essays), the one apocalyptic, the other "optimistic" with a "rosy glow" plerety played identified with the "revivalist preacher Charles G. Finney and his message of instant conversion. He brings out a striking bifurcation in the novel, in whose "pages Negro Christians live in hope, Whites live in fear", an apocalyptic fear peculiar to the rhetoric of the "storefront Negro churches in Baldwin's *Go Tell It on the Mountain*" and Baldwin's own preaching in *The Fire Next Time*.

Strout's essay is, a rejoinder to Baldwin's famous attack, "Everybody's Protest Novel". Designed to show that Baldwin read Mrs Stowe "out of her context", "unhistorically", because he didn't know the facts which Strout reveals. The

objective is academically pertinent and honourable, though I imagine hardly likely to impress a victim of actual oppressions. Another "historical" view, that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in its time probably achieved more for the Black man than the writings of any single later activist, is one which doesn't get much attention from either side.

If Strout finds Baldwin's views on "Stowe's sentimentality" understandable but "unhistorical", Mrs Stowe's contemporary Flaubert would probably have understood Baldwin better. He thought *Uncle Tom's Cabin* a failure because its perspective was "moral and religious" rather than "human". In order to play a slave under torture, Flaubert does not need to be told that he's a decent and godly man who sings hymns and forgives his enemies. The comment is ultimately an aesthetic one, rooted in Flaubert's conviction that if the artist shows reality exactly and dispassionately, the true moral position will become manifest anyway. The aesthete and the activist have more in common here than either has with the historian. But there is a more immediate and often neglected interaction between fiction and history, which the historian might point out. It is that the novel's "sentimentality", that endlessly asserted source of its artistic "failure", was also the source of much of its practical effectiveness. Those contemporaries who loved the book understood this, and claimed that "art" took second place. Flaubert, who put "art" first, understood it too. After noting the book's success, he added: "La vérité seule, l'éternel, le Beau pur ne passionne pas les masses. . . ."

Strout's book begins with a section which precedes the above discussion. It consists of three essays, the first two especially for the volume, on problems of narrative in historiography and fiction. He believes with Trilling "that narrative, history, and explanation are bound up together", and agrees to some extent with those historians and others who believe that in order to understand events totally and in depth the historian requires some of the literary powers of the novelist. But he resists some fashionable claims that there is no difference between the two: that history is fiction, as various theorists have held, or that, as Doctorow says, "there's no more fiction or nonfiction now, there's only narrative."

Ideologies of the anti-realist novel may, as Strout says, remind us of the fictive nature of reality, and critical musclemen announce that story-telling is now in the hands of the film-makers while writers "deal with the play of words". But meanwhile, a massive resurgence has been taking place of almost every kind of fact-fiction hybrid: historical and documentary dramas and novels, "novellized" biographies, and "journalism", the nonfiction-novels of Mailer and Capote's *In Cold Blood*, and most recently the fictional nonfiction-novels that some readers have taken Capote's *Handcarved Coffins* to be. This story, purportedly an account of real-life murders in the investigation of which Capote played a quasi-reportorial part, has been challenged in the 70s not because its "facts" have been disproved but because it exhibits some classic features of the fictional detective story. All this was too late for this book, but the argument that *Handcarved Coffins* could only be a good-story if its facts were true would have been matter for it.

The third section of Strout's book begins with an essay on "The Rediscovery of the Documentary". Authors of fictions have always drawn on pretences of factuality, calling their novels "histories" or, again in the words of Doctorow, "mixing up fact and fiction" in one

way or another. Something which is perhaps more recent, and which depends on or is reinforced by the broadcasting media, is the tendency for "fact" and the process of "investigating" it to turn into a species of documentary drama in its own right. From McCarthy to Watergate, these things have provided a form of politics as theatre, a fictional entertainment similar to any courtroom drama in a B-movie, except that it happens to be true. This in turn presumably influences the manufacture of new B-movie courtroom dramas. More seriously, it provides authors of plays and novels not only with documentary material but with formal models whether for particular local effects or for their very structure. John Hersey's *The Child Buyer* is a novel whose form is that of a report of the proceedings of a State Senate investigation. (As the title suggests, this work, like *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, belongs to a tradition of which *A Modest Proposal*, itself a mock-document or statistical report, is one of the prototypes.) Hersey's book is not mentioned, but Strout has interesting things to say about Kipphardt's *In the Matter of J. Robert Oppenheimer*, which is based on the real-life Oppenheimer hearings, and also influenced by Brecht's *Galileo*, a modern political play about a historical figure who had to endure "hearings". Elsewhere in the book Strout also discusses *The Crucible*.

This chapter on the documentary also deals, among other works, with Mailer's *Armies of the Night*, rightly perceived as "confessional" rather than "novelistic" or "historical", but wrongly dignified by an alleged derivation from St Augustine, "the founder of the form". Mailer's "confessions" belong rather to a style of nudging and hectoring self-exhibition which is probably not much older than the eighteenth century, though the ascription to him of some "metahistorical overbeliefs" may be thought to date back to him from anything earlier than the graduate schools of the modern academy.

A further chapter in this section deals with the "border country" between history and fiction in some recent historical novels. William Styron's *Confessions of Nat Turner*, Gore Vidal's *Burr* and Doctorow's *Book of Daniel* (more "hearings"). The argument is that whereas the older novelists, George Eliot or Conrad, sought to historicize the fictional, the new tendency is to fictionalize the historical. This leads to a final chapter for the section, on "The Anhistorical Novel", which is mainly concerned with Doctorow's *Ragtime*.

*Ragtime*, like Haley's *Roots*, offends historians. Oscar Handlin, in *Truth in History*, has recently said harsh things about both, and Strout says both "are open to serious charges of historical distortion and also of copying fictional plots". Doctorow, he says, "distorts the facts as much of an illusion as anything else". A key episode in *Ragtime* has been shown to derive not from recent American history, but from a novella by Kleist, itself apparently based on a medieval incident in medieval Germany. This is only half-true, since the fact has been pointed out, one discovers that clues have been planted implicitly. The factual pretensions of *Roots* have been more seriously undermined and it has been accused of more than "copying fictional plots": since Strout and Handlin wrote, it has been successfully sued for outright plagiarism.

"Plagiarism" has acquired some ironic status as a creative act. Pierre Menard, in Borges's story devoted infinite pains to the composition of parts of *Don Quixote*. The version was verbally identical with the original, but "almost entirely richer" in the task of making much more difficult for the later writer:



Picasso's "L'Italienne", 1953; from an exhibition of his paintings, drawings, linocuts, etchings and lithographs at Waddington Graphics, 31 Cork Street, London W1, until August 29.

"It is not in vain that three hundred years have gone by, filled with exceedingly complex events. Among them, to mention only one, is the *Quixote* itself." (Another Borgesian "author", César Paladín, wrote *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, among other things). Behind the deliberate examples, in Doctorow or in Borges, is an assumption that previous books are "events" (*hechos*) like any others, including those they report or invent. A quotation marks are called for: a preoccupation: now that the thing is sufficiently established to drop the punctuational fig-leaves and has acquired a *Journal of Psychohistory* "committed to reducing all history to the psychic story of the effects of child-rearing practices", Strout has some misgivings.

But he values psychoanalysis in principle because it involves telling a history rather than merely inventing one, and "ego psychology" because it has given psychoanalysis "a more historical turn". The last chapters are devoted to the problems of psychohistory, and to some applications of it to fictions and their authors, notably Henry Adams and his *Essays*, and Henry James and "The Jolly Corner". The book is full of interesting things. It is also a somewhat unattractively assembled collection of essays rather than a coherently argued book. It is often repetitive, returns again and again to the same small handful of texts, and keeps looking over its shoulder at other critics; so that one sometimes feels that nothing gets said except in support or refutation of someone else. But it is in fact a thoughtful and humane celebration of the "veracious imagination", and unusually well-informed in both history and literature.

The seventeenth annual volume of *American Literary Scholarship* for 1979 edited by James Woodard has just been published (\$74pp. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press. \$27.75. 0 8223 0455 4). Among the authors who are treated individually are Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, Poe, Melville, Whitman, Dickinson, Twain, Henry James, Pound, Eliot, Faulkner, Fitzgerald and Hemingway. From the published work it is possible to make comparisons: "The scholarship on Eliot this year is overshadowed by that on Pound, both in quantity and significance." This has been a good year for Dickinson studies and at least a moderately good one for Whitman scholarship. What *Menard* knew proved to be the most studied of Henry James's novels.

## Firmly in the saddle

By Neil Taylor

R. B. CUNNINGHAME GRAHAM:  
Tales of Horsemen  
137pp. Edinburgh: Cannongate. £5.95.  
0 903937 92 1

Why are these tales chosen for review? It's a puzzle, as Cunningham-Graham himself was, the man whom Hugh MacDiarmid thought the finest figure "in all the millenary pageant of Scotland's writers" but whom the *Times* dismissed as "the aristocratic Socialist and cow-boy dandy".

Alexander Maitland's somewhat arbitrary selection for *Tales of Horsemen* contains ten uneven pieces written between 1899 and 1932. An extract from *The Horses of the Conquest* (1930), which commemorates Hernando de Soto, is followed by some South American descriptive pieces (deriving from Graham's early years ranching and trading in horses), a slight memoir of a hunting hunt, and two stories, one set in Iceland and the other in North Africa. Finally, a piece of second-hand journalism (in fact, the most readable in the whole volume) celebrates the 15,000 mile ride from Buenos Aires to New York undertaken by one of Graham's biographers, Aimé Tachefly.

Ford Madox Ford thought Graham "the most brilliant writer of our present day" and Conrad praised his "wonderful English" but, to tell the truth, his prose is often inept, with its overlong sentences concocted out of phrases loosely comma'd together. The tales and essays are rarely informed by any sense of direction, and there is a naïve reliance on certain "narrative" formulae — the "narrative" of endurance, or the death of the protagonist, for example. Graham was accurate about himself when he wrote to Edward Garpis, in 1898: "I am an essayist and a journalist, and secondarily a story teller, but have the story telling faculty very weakly."

Although the presence of the Graham persona is felt in every line of *Tales of Horsemen*, it fails to provide a satisfactory unity. The opinions and attitudes pretend to more than they truly express. Irony is not deep-rooted, and the approach to the past, one of reclamation for reclamation's sake ("those little incidental things that preserve men and manners for us"), is only infrequently vindicated here by the "buried jewels" which Conrad thanked Graham for unearthing. A barely interpreted past is hardly more valuable than an uninterpreted present, and much of what Graham retrieves (there are descriptions of lessons, for example) has since been immortalized by Westerns, and reads now like rather stale news.

Horses were certainly important to Graham. He inherited the Gurnmore estate when his father died from having his head trodden on by a horse, and he fell in love with his future wife while apologizing for his horse's prancing in front of her. But while the attitude to horses in this book is affectionate, respectful, and rarely sentimental, there is little attempt to realize or explore any relationship (other than extension) between rider and horse. "They sat upon their silver-mounted saddles, with their toes resting in their bell-shaped stirrups, and they moved as easily with every movement that the word riding somehow or other seemed inapplicable to men who, like the centaurs, formed

ELIZABETH PETERS:  
The Love Talker  
266pp. Souvenir Press. £6.95.  
0 283 62442 3

As far as structure is concerned, Elizabeth Peters's *The Love Talker* is pure Gothic. Despite an overlay of supernatural solicitude, this is really a mystery story with a rational explanation provided by criminal intentions and illicit passions, with wills, disinherited and hence illegitimate. Requiring importance. These, rather, old-fashioned ingredients are at first tucked out of sight behind the booney

one body with the horse". Man and horse here merge into a composite: the otherness of the animal is not considered. Instead the horses share a limited range of stoical human qualities: courage, fidelity and resilience. Ultimately they exemplify the suffering motif, but to man by an indifferent universe, and the spirit that can endure and even triumph over that indifference. Only in "Snaekoll's Saga", however, is there any real development of this idea, with the possibility raised in the final line that the Icelandic horse, Snaekoll, might have survived the imposition of a pointless marathon journey across a vast ice-field by eating its rider.

In the end one turns back to other books by Cunningham-Graham and to the better-known, if still flawed, pieces ("The Gold Fish" or the strangely-omitted "Calvary"). And one is left with the thought that his chief importance may have been the impression he made on other writers. Conrad used him as a model for his *Charles Gould*, Shaw for his *Hector Fushaybe*; Pound preserved him simply in the first of the *Pisan Cantos* — "himself unmistakably, / on a horse; an ear and the beard's point showing." And one might also ask whether "The Fourth Magus" (from *Hope*), moving as it does to the speculation that "birth and death are not so very different, after all", did not contribute to Eliot's "Journey of the Magi".

up-to-date heroine, finishing her DPhil, who while not exactly a committed feminist, questions the traditional role allotted to her by the charmingly eccentric aunts who have brought her up — and on whose old-world estate in Maryland the action unfolds. A certain thinness of story-line is redeemed by the consistently lively writing. The heroine's enthusiasm for fantasy literature provides the excuse for references to Andrew Lang and "Goblin Market" while Conan Doyle's extraordinary book of fake photographs, *The Coming of Fairies*, has made its own special contribution to the plot.

Julia Briggs



## The millennial mould

By Richard Harris

ROGER GARSIDE:  
Coming Alive! China after Mao  
458pp. André Deutsch. £8.95.  
0 233 97295 1

A spell in Peking on the British Embassy staff from 1968 to 1970 brought home to Roger Garside what damage had been done to Chinese society by Mao Zedong's single-handed initiative in the cultural revolution. Disruption of the economy, destruction of culture, degeneration of private and public morality: this was a China divided, frightened, at war with itself, ruled by a man visibly failing in mind and body.

Garside returned on a second posting in the crucial year 1976. Zhou Enlai died in January. Mao's old but estranged colleague Zhu De followed in July and Mao himself in September, though evidence readily available from foreign visitors in April and May had confirmed Mao's wandering mind and bumbling, incomprehensible speech. Garside left a very different China at the end of 1979, some last-minute revisions and editions bring his account of China's new era up to the early months of 1980.

Though he includes a useful chapter on the economy, most of his lively narrative of events follows the demand for political freedom and its hesitant satisfaction during the shift from Hua Guofeng's grasping of power to his being eased out in favour of Deng

Xiaoping and Deng's experienced, rehabilitated old guard. In the period since Garside wrote there have been more setbacks to the cause of freedom. The hopes that enlivened a younger generation in 1979 have been partially extinguished by the restraints now imposed.

This process had actually begun in the spring of 1979 but Garside suggests convincingly that this was tactical on Deng's part. That would be harder to argue of this year's further withdrawal of political freedom backed by the hollow sound of revived Maoist slogans. The resistance to Deng's pragmatism is evidently stronger than seemed probable two years ago. On balance, nevertheless, the title *Coming Alive!* can still stand.

Obviously the new leadership realises that the economy is the most compelling task, once the waste and suffering caused by unending Maoist class struggles have been swept away. The men now returning to high office remember the creditable growth rate of the 1950s, at the end of which they saw their plans struck out by the hold but too feverish race into the great leap forward. The cultural revolution only put the struggle against Mao into a starker light. Those men who were disappointed in the 1950s are now back on the national course. True, the country is in a mess still, thanks to the absurd targets for new investment set by the inexperienced Hua Guofeng in 1977 and 1978. The three years of Deng's "readjustment" have not proved long enough to correct the errors. Like some vast supertanker China's bureaucratic millions respond very slowly to a change of course.

Yet the political doubts are not to be thrust aside. The restored party leaders only want to get back to 1956; a younger generation, born and brought up in Mao's China, is ready to look further back, to the whole period of rethinking into which China was thrown by the collapse of the monarchy in 1911. In the company of Peking's foreign correspondents in 1978 and 1979, Garside saw ample evidence of this in his reading at Democracy Wall. Some posters were inspired from on high; most, he thinks, were spontaneous and heartfelt. Among them many were questioning the "new" China into which they had been born.

He recalls the parting warning from a Chinese student to the *Daily Telegraph* correspondent, Nigel Wade, after Wade had been lecturing the students on the Press in Britain: "always remember", said the student, "one billion people and three thousand years of feudalism". The warning is a valid one, however sweeping its assertion or loose its language. The social and political tenets of the Confucian state, a vast, hierarchic pyramid, had ruled China for over a millennium when the Republic was declared in 1912. Against that span of history how firm can the foundations of a new China be—whether of Mao's design or anybody else's? What hopes has the present collective leadership got of imprinting its views on a country that has known one man only at the top of the pyramid through so many past centuries? Can any country compare with China in the widespread literacy of its constant historical references? The past is ever present in the Chinese mind.

If one looks back at the whole period since 1949 the most consistent and unyielding critics of party oppression have been the writers; not all by any means but a talented and courageous minority. Garside knew some of them personally and followed their writings, published or suppressed; he quotes some poems at length to illustrate their theme. The first notable figure to suffer for his opinions (Mao's doing) was Hu Feng in 1955. He is said to have been released from detention but has not yet been rehabilitated publicly. Nor does it seem likely that China under Deng is going to forsake the restraints on writers so determinedly imposed upon them by Mao in his Yanan speech in 1942. Whether harsh or mild, censorship has been recurrent throughout China's Confucian past. Indeed, those impelled by anti-communist opinions in judging China since 1949 are often unaware how far China today owes as much if not more to ingrained habits from the past, on the part of rulers and ruled, as to any newly imported Leninism. Thus Hu Yaobang, Deng's right-hand man in the reorganized party, wore his doctrinal badge at a meeting of the playwrights association in November, 1979:

A work merely reflecting the daily life of the individual, what meaning has it? It is not altogether true to say that love is an eternal theme of literature. A writer should penetrate deeper into life and come to understand the relations between social classes, the struggle of social development. As Stalin said, a writer is the engineer of man's soul.

One writer present at the meeting later described the air of tension among those present: "In the silence one could smell the gunpowder".

Roger Garside shows good judgment in his narrative of events, rightly starting the final act of Mao's China with Zhou Enlai's last public appearance at the National People's Congress meeting in January, 1975, when he reaffirmed the aims of China's four modernizations to reach fruition by the year 2000. (This was the meeting from which Mao deliberately absented himself.) Garside was an active spectator of the vast demonstration that culminated on April 5, 1976 and observed the manner of its suppression. He has scoured all possible sources for information, notably the journals published in Hongkong that had access to good information from Peking. His earlier chapters suggest much happier relations between Yeh, Deng and Hua's chief backer, Ye Jianying, than is now known to have been the case. Despite such quarrelling behind the scenes, despite also the unregenerate Maoists dug in to jobs they are unwilling to forsake, Deng's ascendancy is now beyond doubt in the reorganized party. At the very least there can never again be a return to the blind utopianism that Mao's revolutionary dreaming led him into. But can Zhou Enlai's target of the four modernizations any longer be thought a possibility by any of China's economists? The same doubt, surely, must hang over a communist party that will go on rethinking its doctrine and its mode of government for some decades yet. A millennium is not to be shrugged off, or a "new" China to take shape that easily.

## A Chinaman in Bloomsbury

By Michael Scammell

A fragment of English literary history surfaced at the International PEN Club's conference in Copenhagen recently in the jovial form of Chien Chun Yeh, erstwhile friend of Virginia Woolf's nephew, Julian Bell, informant of Auden and Isherwood during their Chinese tour in 1937, and, for a few years during the late 1940s, a familiar figure in Bloomsbury and Cambridge, at which time he wrote short stories and novels in English and contributed to several reviews. Returning to China in 1949, Yeh submerged himself enthusiastically in Mao's revolution, and was all but drowned by the Cultural Revolution from 1966-76, and has now re-emerged as one of the moving spirits behind China's recent cultural opening to the West and a leading light in the new Chinese PEN centre. Hence his presence in Copenhagen.

Yeh's connection with Bloomsbury dates back to his student days at Wuhan University and the arrival there, in 1936, of the young Julian Bell to teach English. Yeh described himself as "a bad student" in the English department who spent most of his time writing instead of studying, a pastime that immediately attracted the attention of Bell, himself a poet and essayist. What they also had in common were left-wing political views, but whereas Bell came from an upper-middle-class family with strong cultural interests and a comfortable income, Yeh's father, a former teacher, had retired to become a farmer, and Yeh himself had herded cows for part of his childhood in a remote village in the mountains. During the Chinese revolution of 1927, his village had temporarily become a commune and this experience had made a lasting impression on him.

Not long after his arrival in China Bell wrote to John Lehmann, editor of *New Writing*, about his new friend. "I will, if I get a chance, send you some things from one of my students, a really most remarkable young man. He writes, incidentally, in Esperanto, and has just published a book of short stories... He's not got a penny in the world... now in Japan teaching English—and wants to see life... He himself is utterly charming, and also extremely good looking."

Teaching English in Japan and writing in Esperanto rather belied Yeh's deprecating description of himself as "a bad student"—evidence of an irony and a modesty that seem to have endeared him to Englishmen from the beginning. He did not prosper in Japan, however, which was about to go to war with China, and after writing some controversial articles was arrested as a political suspect. By the time Yeh was released and returned to Wuhan, early in 1937, Bell had gone off to take part in the Spanish Civil War—on the Republican side: a few months later, in July 1937, he was killed by a bomb while driving an ambulance.

Yeh, meanwhile, had started to work for the propaganda department of the Chinese United Front, a coalition of left and right formed to resist the Japanese, and it was in this capacity that he met Auden and Isherwood when they went out to collect material for their *Journey to a War*. In the book they describe him as a "shy young man" and mention his friendship with Bell and his stay in Japan. "Yeh himself was in Japan when the war started. The Japanese police arrested him on suspicion that he was an anarchist. 'You must not mind,' he told us, 'if I seem a little stupid sometimes. You see, they struck me very often upon the head! Like all these amazingly tough Chinese revolutionaries, he gives one the impression of being gentle, nervous and soft.' Among the illustrations at the back of the book there is also one of the 'extremely good looking' young Chinese writer, labelled simply 'Intellectual (C.C. Yeh)'.

With connections like these it is not surprising that in 1944 Yeh was selected to come to England to lecture on the glorious achievements of our Chinese allies on the Eastern front and thus help boost the British war effort. On the very day after his arrival, John Lehmann invited him to tea to meet Stephen Spender and a number of other writers. Julian Bell had kept his promise to send translations of Yeh's

stories and several of them had already appeared in *New Writing*.

Almost immediately Yeh was obliged to rush off on a lecture tour of the English provinces, delivering two talks a day on the war against the Japanese. Preferring Mao to Chiang Kai-shek, he was obliged to avoid any reference to politics and concentrated instead on praising the fortitude of the masses. With lonely hours and days to while away in provincial boarding-houses and hotels, he began writing again, this time in English, and soon was contributing more stories to *New Writing*, *Life and Letters* and one or two other journals. He was in Edinburgh on August 15, 1945, the day the war against Japan ended, and returned abruptly to London without waiting to deliver the lecture scheduled for that day.

Now, again, his connections stood him in good stead, for with their help he got a scholarship to King's College, Cambridge, where he was taken up by members of the Bloomsbury élite: Maynard Keynes, Duncan Grant, Leonard Woolf, the Garnetts. He would spend week-ends with the Bells at Charleston Farm, take tea with E.M. Forster in his rooms and discuss Chinese literature with Basil Willey. And he got to know other writers to whom his political views were perhaps more congenial: J.B. Priestley, who invited him to the Isle of Wight, Kingley Martin, who began inviting him to his Saturday dinner parties and introduced him to Walter Allen, V.S. Pritchett, Frances Cornforth and Cyril Connolly.

In 1946 the Sylvan Press brought out a volume of Yeh's short stories, *The Ignorant and the Forgotten*. In 1947 they issued his first novel, *The Mountain Village*, a romanticized portrait of the village he had grown up in and the revolution of 1927; and a year later came his second, *They Fly South*. All of these were written in English. Straightforward, uncomplicated, lyrical, in a style closer to Jack London and the early Gorky than the self-conscious effusions of Bloomsbury, his tales seem to have captivated readers as much by their exotic setting as by their literary art. Nevertheless, the short stories were made a Book Society recommendation, the first novel a "choice", and for the first time in his life Yeh began to make a little money. Margaret Lane and Walter Allen praised his talent, and it looked as though he was set to become an English writer. But his heart (and his subject-matter) was in China, and when the civil war raging there ended in 1949, Yeh hurried back to support the victorious revolution.

About the ensuing years the greying and well-mannered Yeh is now tactfully reticent. It seems that he had not been prepared for the anti-western xenophobia that overtook China, but there was absolutely nothing he could do about it. He was obliged to keep a low profile, renouncing all ties with his former friends and, tacitly at least, supporting the chorus of denunciation aimed at all the evils of the bourgeois West. He was shunted into the relatively safe job of editing *Chinese Literature* in English, and perhaps the best measure of his feelings is that over the next sixteen years he published barely a handful of short stories and no novels at all, sticking instead to innocuous articles and translations.

Then in 1966 came the Cultural Revolution. Yeh's old ties with the West were dragged out and made the pretext for frenzied accusations of "poisoning

the minds" of his readers. He was denounced by his own subordinates, obliged to attend endless "struggle meetings" where he was spat upon, dragged about by the hair and beaten to oblige him to confess, and was demoted to the post of latrine cleaner in the offices of the journal that he had once edited. Periodically he was also dragged off to district meetings where he and other disgraced intellectuals were paraded with placards round their necks proclaiming them "counter-revolutionaries", "enemies of the people", and so on.

These humiliations lasted for what must have been a very long six years, and Yeh's disgrace for ten, but during the last period he was at least left alone after working hours. Still a parish and ostracized, of necessity, by his friends, he turned to writing again and produced a trilogy of novels called *Flames*, *Freedom* and *Dawn*, about the historical period immediately preceding the events described in *The Mountain Village*. Under their collective title *Land*, they came altogether to over 1,800 pages.

While the Cultural Revolution continued, there was no question of publication, but after the death of Mao Chinese political life and culture made another zigzag. Yeh was rehabilitated, his trilogy was published, and he is now writing a sequel to *The Mountain Village*—this time in Chinese.

In Copenhagen, it turned out, Yeh is rather better remembered than here. During vacations from Cambridge, he had been invited by some Danish friends to visit Denmark—"to get away from the rationing". With his facility for languages he had quickly picked up a reading knowledge of Danish, and during his editorship of *Chinese Literature* he translated the complete works of Hans Christian Andersen into Chinese, in sixteen volumes.

In intervals between lunching with Danish luminaries and attending conference sessions Yeh recounted his life story. Despite some of its violent ups and downs, he betrays no bitterness, describing the punishments inflicted at the struggle meetings with the same sly humour he used in describing the behaviour of the Japanese police to Isherwood and Auden. He smiles a lot, although as the two Englishmen noted at the time, it is the Chinese custom to mask their emotions with a smile. But he is still gentle and soft in manner and he retains a very real affection for England and the friends of his youth. For him it was so obviously a golden age, and while not concealing for a moment his continuing loyalty to the socialist faith of his youth, he still feels drawn to the country where he published most of his early work.

Yet there is also a cloud. He is aware of a sense of reserve on the part of those of his old friends who still survive, who felt betrayed by his failure to correspond after his return to China and were offended by the lurid anti-Western slogans that all Chinese writers were compelled to support. He does not spell this out—it is his own interpretation of certain hesitations and pauses—but it seems that he feels misunderstood and more than a little sad that his enforced isolation is now compounded by suspicion and mistrust. In my view it would be good for both English and Chinese literature if Yeh were to come back, and to talk not only about his past experiences, but also about his Chinese writers today. If invited, I do not think he would refuse.

## Poem

Overstride, overstepping,  
Overly, over—whatever you please—  
But break out: stone from sling,  
Star-shooting the night skies...  
You lost the thing—see your eyes now...  
Cod only knows what you keep muttering,  
Groping after your pinnacles, keys.

Vladislav Khodasevich

Translated by Charles Tomlinson and Henry Gifford



Haughty, impassive in her arrogance, an aristocratic old lady strolls in Peking's Wangfujing Street, her fur-collared cloak a brazen relic from a lost world of fashion. "Survivor of the past" (1957) is included in *Visions of China* (London: Travelling Light, £7.95, 0 906333 14 8), a collection of Marc Riboud's brilliant, revealing photographs of Chinese life taken between 1957 and 1980.

## Truffle country

By Simona Pakenham

JOY LAW:  
Dordogne  
221pp. Macdonald. £8.95.  
0 354 04602 0

Dordogne is an inland department of France on the western slope of the Massif Central. Formed in 1790 from Périgord with parts of Agenais, Limousin and Angoumois, it is crossed by the rivers Lot, Dronne, Auvézère and Vézère as well as by the Dordogne itself. Providing spectacular scenery, it offers, Joy Law writes, "the most wonderful combination of allowing one to live the simple life at its best with the better forms of modern conveniences". This, together with recent low property prices, have made it the third most popular department for foreigners in search of holiday homes, to the extent that, in 1974, among the 400 inhabitants of Ribérac, 602 of the electricity meters belonged to British residents. Many of these houses are occupied only for two months in summer, their owners joining with the tourists to create the most appalling traffic problems in July and August. The natives like to be referred to as Périgordins not as Dordognais.

For the student of pre-history the region that gave the name Cro-Magnon to upper palaeolithic man has much to offer, though the most famous archaeological descriptions come alive to those who are not on the spot to compare text with reality.

The *Front Garden* by Candida Lycett Green and Christopher Sykes is a celebration of the English front garden based on the much-acclaimed television programme. The gardens are divided into sections such as "The Formal Garden", "Cottage Gardens", "Topiary" and "Banks and Verges" and there are slightly colour photographs. Most of the gardens are described in a short caption but others are given a more extensive treatment with comments from the owner.

to open up ground not already under cultivation. As the frontpiece to this book shows, Dordogne still farms in strips of a kind that disappeared in England under the Enclosures. Each *parcelle* is rented to its tenants under a system called *métayage* and gives an idea how rural England must have looked before the eighteenth century.

The rivers abound in eels, salmon and crayfish; the woods in mushrooms and *cèpes* as well as nuts, but for the gastronomic Dordogne is, par excellence, the home of the mysterious, uncountable truffle so prolific here about the roots of the oak that tranches had to be dug to keep it from invading the vineyards. Geese are still forcibly fed to produce the *paté de foie gras* so deliciously perfumed. The local cuisine has been described as *sans beurre et sans reproche*, for goose-fat largely replaces butter in its dishes.

Joy Law owns a house in the department and has researched every aspect of its life past and present. Her history is required reading for her fellow residents as well as an incitement to even more visitors. Loving descriptions of scenery and of the pleasant way of life still to be found in Dordogne (not the Dordogne, please!) may do the region a service in persuading tourists to choose spring or harvest time instead of crowding in high summer. It is only in the middle chapters with inevitable lists of churches and castles to be visited that the readability of the book falls off—for no author has yet solved the problem of how to make architectural descriptions come alive to those who are not on the spot to compare text with reality.

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## Twisters and Red Spears

By Dennis Duncanson

ELIZABETH J. PERRY:  
Rebels and Revolutionaries in North China, 1845-1945  
324pp. Stanford University Press. \$25.  
0 8047 1055 4

Sceptical political analysts have from time to time pointed out that Mao Zedong "people's war", for all the Marxists' romanticizing of it in the 1960s as Robin-Hood "freedom fighting", bore a disconcerting resemblance to the vicious banditry that plagued rural China for hundreds of years. Elizabeth J. Perry has now identified a region in the heartland of China in which the matter can be put to the test, with some degree of certainty. Hui-pai, lying between the right bank of the Yellow River and the left bank of the Hui River, has been the scene, in the past two centuries, of two major "peasant revolts", of the Nien ("Twisters") and of the Red Spears, as well as of guerrilla activity by the communists before the liberation in 1949. It is a region rich in historical records, and the communists there chronicled fully their own policies, and their experiences, consequently, a determined researcher into the planning and execution of the communist struggle for power stands a good chance with Hui-pai of getting to the bottom of the perpetual conundrum of how much weight the analyst should attach to what Lenin called spontaneous reaction to objective circumstances, and how much to mobilization willed by his "subjective factor", the Communist Party. Half a dozen Japanese studies of social conditions in this part of China have provided Dr Perry with still more information and a detached perspective.

The evidence is presented simply and dispassionately. Hui-pai has always been poverty-stricken, and past outbreaks of banditry have tended to follow the frequent incidence of drought and flood, especially the periodical changes of channel of the Yellow River, China's sorrow. Administrative ineptitude, burdensome tax levies for central government purposes, and the depredations by marauding armies at every change of dynasty, all added in imperial times, and to some extent still added in the twenty years of Republican rule between 1911 and the Japanese invasion, to the environmental excuses for the natives to turn brigand and start raiding neighbouring districts which were either temporarily better off or else less able to stand up for themselves. Highway robbery, the smuggling of salt (a state monopoly), and feudalism through lineages of different surname over property or "honour", were also liable to elevate the area into open conflict. Another essential factor was the millennia Chinese practice of female infanticide; one in five of rural males in Hui-pai spent his life as a "bare-stick" bachelor and was therefore ideal—nothing-to-lose-but-his-chains fodder for rebellion.

Central-government reaction invariably took two forms: direct military onslaughts on bandit lairs, or encouragement of the age-old propensity of the natives, when threatened by brigands, to organize their own defence. Other authors have brought to light the fact that village militias, financed in part from the *likin* or octroi sanctioned for the purpose by the Manchus in the 1850s, tended to degenerate into swashbucklers themselves. Probably the Boxers who besieged the foreign legations at Peking in 1900; the Nien were the robbers in this confrontation, the Red Spears the backsliding cops. On both sides, religion and magic were invoked through the launching of new—or revived—sects under gurus (the local term for whom, *fung chi*, was a homonym of the word for "freedom") and the handing-out of amulets that conferred invulnerability; the Red Spears proved their amulets to doubters by firing volleys of lead into anybody who did stop a bullet in battle must be of impure heart. Dr Perry seems to be the first to describe the "fortified communities" which, on either their own initiative or the government's constituted basis for the sects and

militias. Here, incidentally, is an answer to those critics of "pacification" in the Vietnam war who used to say that "sweep and destroy" and the organization of peasants in "strategic hamlets"—often dominated by Cao Dai, Hoa Hao, or other sects—showed ignorance of the traditional social structure; in reality such tactics have a very long history in the Chinese world.

Dr Perry debunks the Marxist analysis at two levels. Firstly, she shows that Chinese brigandage had something to do with poverty but little to do with class: there were no rich people; landlords and tenants were invariably in it together, on whichever side, with the rest of their lineage; and the motives of individuals were as mixed in Hui-pai as anywhere else in the world. "The contention" (of Western Marxists), she concludes, "that the sectarian was a 'primitive revolutionary' whose actions were 'necessary for a transition to more developed or advanced revolutionary organizations seems, in the case of Hui-pai, at variance with the historical record." Indeed, the tactics of Leninism depend very largely on the mobilization of whatever antagonisms lie to hand. Secondly, she shows that the slow and painstaking establishment of social control over Hui-pai by the Communists, in the face of two

decades of setbacks, entailed a deliberate takeover of brigandage, starting with a central-committee resolution as early as 1926 to subvert the Red Spears and make them "temporary allies". Ironically, the "socialist transformation" may have made use of the old feuds in Hui-pai, but it has not done away with them: two rival communes which fought over water-rights during the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s under the banners, one of Liu Shao-chi and the other of Mao Zedong, were descendants of the Bare Egg Society, who once upon a time sired the Nien, and of their enemies the Old Cow Society, who sired the Red Spears.

## Retaining face

By Raymond Dawson

HWANG CHUN-MING:  
The Drowning of an Old Cat and Other Stories  
Translated by Howard Goldblatt  
270pp. Indiana University Press. £16.50 (paperback, £5.95).  
0 253 324521 1

While fiction on the Chinese mainland since 1949 has been much concerned with the depiction of revolutionary models and has been busy conforming with Maoist doctrine that "art is to serve the workers, peasants, and soldiers", there has been a much livelier literary scene on Taiwan. These stories by the gifted young writer Hwang Chun-ming deal mainly with the struggle of the underprivileged to preserve their face and dignity amid the changes wrought by the coming of Western ways to the island.

The title story is set in the village of Clear Spring, which is but within reach of noxious urban influences. It tells of the resistance to the conversion of the natural spring of Dragon-eye well into a swimming-pool to serve the recreational needs of fat cats from the city. The resistance is led by old

codgers who generally while away the evening of their lives in the grounds of the local temple, but now flock to the village meeting to deliver their angry protests. The project will be disastrous for geomantic reasons. The flustered, near-nakedness will stir up old Dragon-eye himself. His whole dragon's body will grow restless and there will be unpredictable consequences for the whole community. But in this battle between pristine purity and modern pollution, in this uneven contest between old and new—between the temple and the swimming-pool—the latter is bound to win. The valiant campaign for the protection of rural Taiwan ends in tragedy.

In "The Taste of Apples" an impoverished family at last savours a prospect of security because the breadwinner is run over and badly injured by an American officer who is only too willing to pay handsomely for a clear conscience; and in "The Two Signposters" the sad lot of rural youth torn from the soil and transplanted to an uncongenial urban environment is nicely symbolized by the two young men from a remote village in eastern Taiwan who spend solid-destroying days painting the breasts of a gigantic mural depicting the most popular starlet of the day. The final story is the apocryphal "Sayonara! Last-chien," which means "Goodbye" in Japanese

and Chinese. It tells of the embarrassing plight of a young Taiwanese business man, who has to entertain visiting Japanese colleagues by laying on girls for them in his native village.

The longest story, "The Gong", tells how a gong-beater becomes redundant because public announcements have been taken over by a pedicab driver with a loudspeaker. He drifts into the gang of down-and-outs who hang about in the shade opposite the coffinshop, waiting to earn a pittance for taking part in funeral processions. (This traditionally degrading occupation was, for example, the final stage in the decline of Lao She's luckless rickshaw boy, Camel Hsiang-tzu.) Here among the dregs of humanity the battle for prestige continues.

In these and other stories, Hwang Chun-ming taps a rich vein of traditional Chinese humour as he portrays the struggles of little people to retain their face despite the ordeals that fate has in store for them. He records the posturing, the dignities, the tiny victories and inevitable disasters of the underdog with great tenderness and humanity. But the work transcends the particular and becomes of universal importance because here the underdog is the traditional world trying valiantly to survive against the relentless pressures of modernity.



# The commercial order

By Istvan Hont

GEORGE SHELTON:  
Dean Tucker and Eighteenth-Century  
Economic and Political Thought  
289pp. Macmillan. £15.  
0 333 28521 2

Dean Josiah Tucker is well known as an eighteenth-century polemical writer on the nature of the state, and on the American war, and against dissent in both its religious and political forms. More importantly, he was also the only writer in eighteenth-century England who attempted to write a general synthesis of the theory of commerce on the ambitious scale of his two Scottish contemporaries, Sir James Stewart and Adam Smith. Warburton, his bishop in Gloucester, deeply offended him by the accusation that he made "trade his religion". Warburton was being not only malicious but imprecise in his language, for Tucker was no mere a friend of trade or merchants, but Adam Smith. For him commerce "in the large and extensive signification of the word" was the essence of modernity, the creator of our "social relations". "How are the ends of both religion and government to be answered", Tucker asked in one of his commercial sermons, "but by the system of universal commerce"? This new system was the theoretical origin of his projected great work, *The Elements of Commerce*, which in the end never passed beyond the initial stage of its first instalment. Despite promising beginnings, Tucker never delivered his great synthesis. This failure was perhaps symptomatic and should stand as a reminder that while England might have been the classical case of early capitalism, classical political economy in these isles was not an English but a Scottish theoretical achievement, at least in its eighteenth-century guise.

In the prolegomena to his projected general theory, Tucker quickly grasped the essence of Montesquieu's metaphor of modern monarchy as a planetary system in which the gravity of self-interest is tempered by honour, leading to a situation where, in the classical formulation of *The Spirit of the Laws*, the individual advances the public good, while he only thinks of promoting his interest. Tucker generalized Montesquieu's notion of the monarchy into a continuous interplay of self-love and social love in commercial society, "analogous to the centrifugal and centripetal powers in the planetary system". He saw the market as the theatre of these passions, and not as a simple mercantile instrument.

"What is a market, but a collection of inhabitants?", wrote Tucker, to the joy of Turgot, who translated the passage into French. Behind the division of labour — for Tucker the epitome of human social organization — stood the motive power of man's artificial needs. The attempt to satisfy these needs created the social bond of the market, while the possibility of their constant self-multiplication could preserve the equilibrium between passions and interests. Tucker boldly presented this process as a seamless development culminating in the application of modern machinery. The introduction of machinery cut prices and so created for its products a mass market whose size he estimated in the thousands of "market sociability to the entire population". From this perspective, Tucker easily dismissed Montesquieu's famous argument about the unemployment effect of the introduction of machinery as a purely temporary process which would be automatically rectified by the emergence of new mass-consumption needs.

But why did this theory run into the sand even when developed by a trusted Whig pamphleteer safe under the umbrella of royal patronage? As Tucker perceived, while the commercial system proper "like a beautiful machine" regulates and adjusts its own motions, the political superstructure or legal framework of commerce was "clumsy, imperfect work, which is always out of order, unless the market stands by to correct and amend it". This, might be said, to talk of the revolution of 1688, of which he was a stout defender, as unfinished Englishmen, which included, were still in

hondage", he argued, "not to the Crown indeed, as formerly, but to [their] fellow subjects; and we still want the Glorious Revolution in the commercial system which we have happily obtained in the political".

Given this line of "revolutionary" attack, Tucker had no choice but to press into service the language of rights. Taking as his point of departure a position strongly akin to that of Chapter Five of Locke's *Second Treatise*, namely that "every man hath a right by nature to subsist himself, by his own labour and industry", he argued that a "trade may be said to be free, in which every person may engage as he pleases". The key term in Tucker's argument was "monopoly", since "in a commercial sense, every exclusion from the benefit of trade due to all men by natural right is a monopoly". Monopolies were the remnants of "ancient, despotic power and Gothic barbarity": a "Gothic baron in the lured interest" was "just the same kind of monster as an exclusive company in the commercial". This to have developed his line of argument as a basis for a reformed framework for state policy would indeed have entailed a "very violent attack upon the whole commercial system of Great Britain" as Adam Smith had realized in writing the *Wealth of Nations*.

To substantiate his attack on both agrarian and commercial monopolies required a historical critique of positive law as the basis of English civil society, but because his system lacked a theoretical framework for the comprehension of property rights, such a critique was beyond Tucker's intellectual powers and, of course, his political competence. After giving up the "great project", he used its early fruits only in partial polemics. Though a radical opponent of monopolies in civil society, he employed his theory of commercial polity in the justification of England's early lead and semi-monopolistic position in world trade. As he observed, against Hume's desperate attempts to create theoretical room for under-developed countries, once a rich nation got a lead over its competitors, it could maintain it practically indefinitely. His "imperialism of free trade" was also behind his forceful polemic in favour of severing the constitutional relationship between England and the American colonies. The needs of commerce would force the colonists back into a relationship with the mother country and the future equilibrium would be defined by their relative commercial, not their political forces.

Similarly, in the first substantial book-length attack on Locke's theory of government in the eighteenth-century, Tucker argued that the danger of keeping the "new-light-men" of America within the framework of the British Empire was that domestic opposition to the new commercial system would be reinforced. It was Walpole rather than the "people" who supported the building of the new and "free" commercial society in his own lifetime. An enemy of "republican pedantism" and hypocritical aristocratic "neo-Harringtonianism", Tucker

quickly added the Lockians to the other defenders of the pre-commercial notion of society. While he accepted the limited use of the language of rights, he also saw clearly that the voluntarism inherent in the ideology of a social contract endangered any established order, including the commercial, and that its excesses could subvert his own crusade for the freedoms of the market. In his view, the origins of political society were to be explained from the relevant facts of the commercial order, starting from "the advantages arising from the particular genius to abridge labour by means of machines", as he forcefully put it.

Tucker deserves the attention of all serious scholars of eighteenth-century intellectual history, and as an introduction to him, George Shelton's book may serve a useful purpose. The surviving data of Tucker's life are diligently collected here, and thanks to the lengthy — though not always judiciously selected — quotations from

Tucker's own writings which take up a large proportion of the book's 289 pages, the reader gets a good taste of its subject's ideas and style of thinking. A bibliography of Tucker's works would not have come amiss though, indicating those items which are available in reprint.

But as far as interpretation and explanation go, Tucker's fate seems to be sealed. Shelton's book is not an academic work in the modern sense. It contains very little independent analysis; this is the sort of book in which a conjectural genealogy and the appetite of Tucker's house-keeper turned second wife are adequately treated, whereas his interesting theory of feudal government "need not detain us". The little is misleading: Shelton has not succeeded in setting Tucker into the context of eighteenth-century economic and political thought. He ignores modern scholarship on the intellectual history of the period which in the past

decade has gone through a minor revolution; on the only occasion when work from the 1970s intrudes on his horizon, he quickly reassures us that, so far as Adam Smith is concerned, "for the purposes of this book" he has "adopted the traditional view". As a consequence, Shelton's comparisons between Tucker and Adam Smith remain as amateurish as in earlier works on Tucker. (Incidentally, Smith had the third London edition and not the Glasgow edition of Tucker's *Essay on Trade* in his library).

An intellectually reliable study of Tucker, and one which explains his achievement in the light of the ideas of his contemporaries, is yet to come. It will not be an easy task to write it. It is a fallacy to believe that it is easier to write about minor or neglected authors than about past masters, for any prospective recovery of the former must start precisely from an intimate knowledge of the latter.

## Escaping from the study

By D. D. Raphael

GAVIN ARDLEY:  
The Common Sense Philosophy of  
James Oswald  
102pp. Aberdeen University Press.  
£11.  
0 08 025717 8

The Scottish philosophy of common sense was popular in its native heath in the eighteenth century and then enjoyed quite a strong following in France during the nineteenth. Modern scholars with relevant knowledge would nearly all say that the one common-sense philosopher who counts is Thomas Reid. His criticisms of Hume are well worth attention and his method of appealing to the uses of language is altogether in the spirit of present-day linguistic philosophy.

There was also James Beattie, whose *Impassioned Essay on the Nature and Immutability of Truth* was much more widely read than the sober, carefully argued works of Reid. The contemporary popularity of Beattie may be gauged from an entry in Fanny Burney's Diary for 1780, recalling a meeting with a fashionable young lady who admitted doubts about an afterlife as a result of reading Hume. After expressing her shock, Fanny recommended Beattie as an antidote. But serious students of the subject-matter today would join Hume in dismissing Beattie as a "bigotted silly fellow" whose criticisms of Hume can safely be ignored.

A number of scholars would include Dugald Stewart in the common-sense school. He was a worthy man and an effective teacher in his time. However, he had little to say that was original or in any way illuminating, so that he hardly attracts any more attention now than Beattie.

## Climbing to Jerusalem

(For Moshe and Zlora Dör)

The locomotive, a short satisfied steers horse, scores the plain after which five carriages jangle. At the mountain's jointure, with anemones that spot blood, glimmering orange fruits like emeralds, tumble. A stuttering olive pierces with age the terrace, being adored as if a woman of a hundred. The denser patches of anemone blood the higher we thread, — you abandon us. We drew onergy as Jerusalem hicheta its stones the herdman, His shadow fringed with sheep. Pure absence measures the plain. their colonial wounding, where the stream molls between trees slender as astonishment, their long flanks dressed with fingers. Amongst glimmering wheels of fuel the secret catches fire with the world.

Jon Silkin

# The weight of England

By Philip Gardner

JOHN WAIN:  
Poems 1949-1979  
182pp. Macmillan. £9.95.  
0 333 28789 4

Despite publishing five books of verse since *Mixed Feelings* came out thirty years ago, John Wain has never quite consolidated the position as a poet which one might have predicted for the undergraduate founder-editor of *Mandarin*, the new broom presenter of the BBC radio programme *First Reading* in 1953, and the clever "Movement" poet determined not to remain typecast by villanelle and terza rima. In fact, since the publication of *Weep before God* (1961), Wain has stepped into the wings of the British poetic stage: of himself as a writer, he said in his autobiography in 1962 "I don't fit in properly anywhere". In the last twenty years, extracts from the long poems in which he has mostly concentrated have tended to see the light, before book-publication, in journals more peripheral than *Encounter*, the *Spectator* or the *Listener*, in which his reputation as a poet of the 1950s was made. The established status suggested by his election to the Oxford Chair of Poetry in 1973 was deceptive, and it was perhaps in way awareness of this that he told a contemporary interviewer one of the reasons he was pleased: his election might prompt more people to read his own poetry. Whether they did so is hard to prove, but in recent years it seems a safe guess that Wain's name has been associated with *Feng* (1975), his poetic re-working of the Hamlet story from the viewpoint of Claudius, but with his splendid biography of his hero Samuel Johnson, that earlier pilgrim from Staffordshire to the vicissitudes of literary London.

The present volume (which excludes *Feng*, as still in print) gives Wain the poet an opportunity to emerge from the shadows and demonstrate that he has moved away from the neo-Empsonian ingenuities of early poems like "On Reading Love Poetry in the Dentist's Waiting Room". He does this partly by revising history. The volume presents a selection from his earlier books of poetry, together with a sizeable batch of poems, and a batch of sizeable poems, written in the last ten years. He includes (I am glad to see) the Dentist's Waiting Room poem, but omits other prime 1950s specimens like "Reason for Not Writing Orthodox Nature Poetry" and the tough-

sentimental "Don't let's spoil it all. I thought We Were Going to be Such Good Friends"; the total effect is to preserve only four of the thirteen terza rimas and villanelles from *A Word Carved on a Sill* (1956).

From *Weep before God* — still in my view Wain's best volume — six poems are discarded. The rambling "A Boisterous Poem about Poetry" needs no lament, but I am sorry to miss "Time Was", whose excellently articulated iambic pentameters are a reminder that Auden, as well as Empson and Robert Graves, assisted Wain's technique, and the compassionate "On the Death of a Murderer", which originated out of Edwin Muir's recollections of post-war Prague, could more justly have been shortened than left out. Wain also omits "Poem", the earliest example in his work of a form — loping couplets sometimes with imperfect rhymes — which he often uses less well, and for less affecting subjects, in poems he has retained. In this one, his investigation of the possibility that there exists in the suffering world some worst "locus of torment", which only a god can put his finger on, leads to a conclusion wholly appropriate in its dissonance:

To perceive that spirit of suffering in its raging purity  
Is to a god the burden of his divinity  
[...]  
He has no ignorance to hold him separate.  
Everything is known to a god. The gods are desperate.

Wain is equally severe (though this time, I think, to the reader's advantage) in his pruning of *Wildtrack* (1965) and *Letter to Five Artists* (1969). Half the former poem — whose title means a sound track not synchronized to pictures, and here describes a mixed method verbal film about humanity and human history — is left out, including sections relating to superstition and to the "homogenization" of America and Russia between the wars. From the latter book Wain omits the two least good letters, "Moon dust" and "Junk Sculptures".

A poet who compiles a "new and selected" volume is free to print what he thinks will best represent him. With Wain, however, the personal choice to select rather than collect carries with it a general comment which is so beside the point as to backfire. "This is not my 'collected poems', he says in his Author's Note; so far so good, but, "I don't believe anyone under about sixty-five should start talking in those terms". Auden, Graves, Blunden, Fuller, Wain's predecessors in the Oxford

Chair? Kingsley Amis (fifty-seven)? T. S. Eliot (forty-seven)? One is left feeling irritated at being deprived of the full record of Wain's poetic career, rather than satisfied with the samples he has chosen to offer. Perhaps, at fifty-five, Wain should simply have been crasier: a sequence of variously cut back volumes called *Collected Poems* has never bothered Robert Graves, and Amis's recent *Collected Poems* failed to include twenty-five from his first volume *Bright November*.

"Selected" or "collected" aside, this volume has one feature which to my knowledge makes it unique. Instead of printing its poems in chronological order from earliest to most recent (only Auden tampered with that order, and even he later changed his mind), Wain does the opposite: logically, this volume could have been entitled *Poems 1979-1949*. As if trying to avoid some petrifying historical perspective and demonstrate immediately that the likeness of growing-up everywhere: "... though the males were hot-blooded in Brindisi among forms in Treatham Park they had it just as easy". The other is the Audenesque "To Be Continued" (published in *Weep before God*), which concentrates on the "Babel" of Wain's toughness of adventure heroes who preceded the "unfair octopus" of girls and romance. Nor is there any great stylistic leap from the last line of the early "Riddle for a Christmas Cracker" ("Swiftly as white intuitive pigeons fly") to the modified terza rima which opens the section of "Shorter Poems 1970-1978": "My conflicts die! Like clouds that shred into a perfect sky". And the best of the recent shorter poems, "Evening over the Place of Cadiz" (whose god ones are "In the Beginning" and "On a Tree Cut in Paper") successfully avoids the temptation to "wax more eloquent and knowing" which could so easily, Wain felt in the 1950s, overtake those who wrote "orthodox nature poetry". Here, as there, Wain simply loves "this mountain and this bay".

Over again, these gifts: the high bareness: the spear-grass, the sheep carved in stone watching me pass, the darkening granite [...]  
and, at sea, the day's sun in his lead coffin.

"Cameo", the earliest poem here, and a good enough one for any other poet to have begun his volume with, caps its brief description of lovers with a terse "no more is worth saying". In the 1960s, however, having remarked off his novels "I lack the power of sustaining large structures", Wain inclined towards his fatal Cleopatra, the

long poem. Even the celebrated "A Song about Major Fairbairn", whose heart, like that of so much of Wain's work, is in the right place, embroiders its stark and memorable pentameters ("The wise men passed. The clever men appeared.") with musing generalizations in a laxer metre ("To take the life of an enemy is to help him, a little, towards destroying your own."). There are impressive passages in both *Wildtrack* and *Letter to Five Artists*: "The Day Self contemplates the Defeat of Time", the openings of "Ferns" and of "Music over the Water". But the consciously modernist technique of *Wildtrack*, and its jumps in time and place, signalled by prose quotations and marginal sub-headings, suggest a less dexterous disciple's wish to emulate Eliot — especially when one of the "authorities" quoted is *The Golden Bough*. Echoes of Eliot ("liquid undine men"; "The poet's flesh" is always divided and swallowed among whisperers") are also heard, within a few lines of each other, in the introductory Poem of *Letter to Five Artists*, and the latter themselves, discursive tributes by one artist to the work of friends, are trade union declarations of solidarity "in a tone-deaf world", rather than autonomous creations made out of the quarrel with oneself.

In 1962, Wain spoke of his state of mind when writing, and against the odds completing, his novel *Living in the Present*. From the experience he had learned that "given half a chance, I could produce some kind of work simply by perseverance". If, with A.E. Housman, one believes that "poetry is either easy or impossible", Wain's words have an ominous ring, and go some way to explain why much of this volume has the virtues of rhetoric rather than poetry. Connected with the communication both of humane values and of an imaginative response to experience, Wain sometimes errs on the side of too much clarity: over-insistent, he bludgeons the reader or goes on too long. Sometimes, aware of the reader over his shoulder or the audience in the hall, he grasps ambitiously for a wide screen that blurs at the edges. What he can do when he forgets them is apparent in many of this volume's short lyric poems, most particularly "This Above All is Precious and Remarkable", which records with simple and penetrating truth his perception of life as a pattern made out of accidents. "More, more, more, always, let there be more!", Wain cries to life at the end of his recent poem "My Name". By all means, so long as he sticks to the bardic identity he elects in that poem: not a shire horse, however admirable, but a flying-fish.

But this is to cavil at a real treasure house, reminding us of the breadth and richness of poetry written by Englishmen (and a few Scots, Irishmen, Welshmen, and Americans as well). The book is a pleasing object, well bound and handsomely printed, which is important; since it will be around for a long time in the normal course of events. But anthems on whoever decided to do away with a table of contents, which is more important in this kind of book than in almost any other. As it is, half the usefulness and pleasure in rummaging through the contents in anticipation is gone. If space was at a premium, thirteen pages of Thomas Hood could have been shortened considerably without spoiling the balance of the selections.

*Mina Loy* by Virginia M. Koussis (148pp. Louisiana State University Press. £9.60. 0 8071 0672 0) is a study of the British-born Modernist painter and poet who died in 1966. The author characterizes her "exceptional beauty, cerebral disposition and cosmopolitan background" and catalogues her notable friends and contemporaries, who included James Joyce, Marcel Schwob, Gertrude Stein, and Ezra Pound. The book reprints many of her poems in English and French faithfully reproducing her typographical experiments.

## Traditional treasures

By Robert Bernard Martin

JOHN WAIN (Editor):  
Everyman's Book of English Verse  
672pp. Dent. £8.95.  
0 460 64369 2

This fine anthology everywhere betrays the presence of a poet who is also a critic. He has described himself as having conventional taste in literature, so that if generations have admired a poet, it is probable that John Wain will do so too. His admiration is generous, and he does not feel he has to dismiss one poet because he happens also to love the works of a totally different sort of writer. Least of all does he seem to seek out works that are particularly like his own.

There is something inherently graceful in carping at a man's selection of poems, just as it would be impertinent to comment upon his choice of wife: one is hardly more personal than the other. For that reason it is a relief to report that there are few poems in this long book that probably should not have been included. One of my own tests of an anthology is the erotic verse: never trust either an editor who is too fastidious to include it or one who spends a great deal of time over it. Wain is just right, with a pretty taste in

hawdy, whether it be the expected lyrics of Donne, Cotton, and Rochester, or delightfully witty and dry-minded Anon.

What the editor claims as the chief innovations in the book are the translations of Anglo-Saxon verse and the large number of excerpts from long works. In fact, there are only some half-dozen translations of *Deor*, *The Seafarer*, and, other Anglo-Saxon poems (no *Beowulf*), but they are excellent, and they do extend the scope of the anthology to make it clear that English poetry did not begin with Langland and Chaucer, as Wain says other anthologies imply.

The excerpts are less convincing, particularly those from Shakespeare's plays, which have been chosen without any apparently good reason, since they are sections of scenes, torn bleeding from their setting. It is true, as Wain has argued elsewhere, that we all return to favourite passages in long works, but in such a case we know the context without it, the reader is lost. On this other hand readers who have the context firmly in mind will hardly be interested in these snippets.

The publishers' name for these anthologies is spectacularly unsuitable: since whatever an anthology may be, it is not for every man. Probably the only word of better poems by other poets, that may be better poems. The amount of space Wain allots to individual writers is not necessarily his measure of their worth, but comparative figures

surprises (thrown in by someone he trusts). It could then double as a reference book and a pleasure for quiet reading. Wain includes many of the old favourites that one turns to automatically, almost as if checking the text, on the assumption that no collection can be complete without them. And there are plenty of delights previously unknown, at least to me, in an appealing anthology, and minor doubts one may feel on a few points are to be taken as personal beliefs about how it might have been even better.

It is probably tempting to throw out a lot of the poems we all learned at school, in order to show that the standard poets are considerably more varied than we suspected. Occasionally Wain seems to have yielded to temptation; in the Browning section, for example, the only poems included are "Two in the Campagna", "Caliban upon Setebos", and "Instans Tyrannus", surely an aesthetic representation for either old friends of Browning or new acquaintances.

Anthologies are naturally on the side of the small battalions, the lyrics and short poems, and make difficulties, when a poet's best works happen to be longer than, say, 200 lines. If the entire poem is printed, it will be at the expense of other works by other poets; if it may be better poems. The amount of space Wain allots to individual writers is not necessarily his measure of their worth, but comparative figures

give some curious results. Christina Rossetti is admittedly a great poet whose works are in constant danger of being neglected, but it is difficult to believe that calling attention to her deserves almost as much room as Hardy, Hopkins, Swinburne, Meredith, and D.G. Rossetti have together. No amount of Donne's poetry is too much for me, but is he worth as many pages as the total occupied by Blake, Keats, and Yeats? Crashaw has some eight pages to himself, as many as Sidney, Greville, Lyly, Wyatt, and George Herbert share. Is Betjeman twice as important as Wilfred Owen or Edward Thomas and worth four of Stevie Smith? Ebenezer Elliott is made to seem more important than Lovelace, Rochester, or Collins ("Ebenezer Who? you may well ask. He was the Corn-law Rhyme, and much better than I remember from reading him as an undergraduate, but he probably has unique space in such competition).

Perhaps John Wain did not have time to re-read the poems before writing the preface, for the Tyrian trader who undoes his corded bales on an Atlantic beach in Spain before an audience of dark Iberians at the end of "The Scholar-Gipsy" is here described as "Syrian", and it is the inopportunist coast of Britain where he is said to "unleash his bundles", as if he were an itinerant rug-reorderer pawing his wares to a group of shy Spanish waiters in Brighton.

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# Probing the *paliotto*

By John Beckwith

ROBERT P. BERGMAN:  
The Salerno Ivories  
Ars Sacra from Medieval Amalfi  
268pp. Harvard University Press.  
£22.50.  
0 674 78528 2

Amalfi, so superbly situated on the slopes of the Lattari Mountains rising from the Gulf of Salerno, although mentioned in a letter of Pope Gregory I in 590, did not reach its hey-day until the tenth century. By this time it had freed itself from the Duchy of Naples and from the dominion of the Lombards, but wisely it always acknowledged a kind of suzerainty under the Byzantine emperors. From the ninth to the eleventh century Amalfitan political leaders and members of the nobility often received titles or honours conferred by the emperor and maintained quite an establishment in Constantinople. Pantaleone, son of Maurus of Amalfi, had a large house there; two monastic foundations served the needs of the large merchant community in the city. Commerce was the dominant factor. Amalfi was to become, along with Venice, the leading Italian merchant republic of its day, with fleets courting over the Mediterranean and warehouses in all the important Near Eastern towns - Antioch, Jerusalem, Acre and Old Cairo (Fustat). Amalfitan colonies existed in northern Africa, Sicily and, nearer home, Salerno, Apulia and surely Rome. The connection with the Abbey of Monte Cassino was held very firm but also the connection with Islam. In short, the Amalfitani were to be found everywhere - as William of Apulia described them, "bearing away their merchandise to

sell/And loving to carry back the wares they have bought". Thus the members of the family of Maurus commissioned bronze doors in Constantinople which were given to the Cathedral at Amalfi, to Monte Cassino, to San Paolo fuori le Mura in Rome and to the sanctuary of San Michele at Monte Sant'Angelo in Apulia.

With the coming of the Normans the Amalfitani had to think again and they literally handed themselves over to Robert Guiscard for protection against their old enemies, the Suberitani. In fact, under the Normans the two hostile cities became confederates but the Amalfitani were not content with Norman rule, frequently rebelled and were finally subdued by King Roger II in 1131. Four years later the Pisans attacked the city, and repeated their vicious attack in 1137. The destruction was considerable. Thus passed the glory of Amalfi.

In his excellent study of a group of ivory carvings in the Cathedral of Salerno, usually known as the *paliotto*, Robert P. Bergman examines the iconography of the Old and New Testament scenes to be found on the panels, analyses their style with great perspicuity, and offers the view that the *paliotto* was originally a pair of doors set up in the chancel screen in the cathedral around the time of its consecration in 1084 during the episcopate of Alfanus I (1058-1085). Alfanus had composed the *liturgical* which accompanied the frescoes depicting the Old and New Testament scenes in the atrium of the basilica at Monte Cassino. But, of course, the iconography and the style of the ivory carvings are complex and reflect many different traditions. In his attempt to unravel these traditions Professor Bergman ranges widely, from the sixth-century Cotton Genesis in the British Museum, now, as the result of a fire in the eighteenth

century, reduced to a few charred fragments, some tenth-century Byzantine Coptic, some eleventh-century Anglo-Saxon manuscripts and a great many other artefacts, frescoes, ivory carvings, bronze doors and so on. Bergman was a pupil of Kurt Weitzmann at Princeton and his book is very much a product of the tuition he received there. Weitzmann's "cyclic" approach to the transmission of narrative illustration, his establishment of recensions or "families" of cycles, often based on lost prototypes, arouses some misgivings. One scholar once wrote that late antique manuscripts appeared to have been produced at Alexandria, Antioch, Rome, Constantinople - and Princeton. In the long run Bergman's conclusions on the Salerno ivory carvings appear to be sound. There is, however, another snag. No one denies that the carvings appear to be based in part on a group called "Grado" at one time thought to be part of a chair sent to Grado from Alexandria by the Emperor Heraclius in the early seventh century. No one today, as far as this reviewer is aware, accepts this tradition. But a few years ago Weitzmann wrote a most learned article arguing that these "Grado" panels were produced in a Syro-Palestinian workshop in the late seventh or eighth century. This theory is disturbing. It seems to me that the panels are more likely to have been produced in southern Italy, probably in Amalfi, in the tenth century but it would take another article to demonstrate why. Bergman's conclusion that the Salerno panels were produced at Amalfi seems entirely cogent.

The book concludes with a catalogue of the panels and related Amalfitan ivory carvings and a sequence of good illustrations. It will clearly remain a standard work for many years to come.



George Bellows (1882-1925) wanted to be a professional baseball player, but became an artist who produced a series of lithographs protesting against German atrocities in Belgium during the First World War and whose most famous paintings are of boxing matches. This lithographed self-portrait (1921) by Bellows is taken from an issue of The Princeton University Library Chronicle (Volume XLII, Number 2, Winter 1981, 35.) devoted to an exhibition of graphic arts in America, 1670-1900 that was recently held at the library. The issue includes articles on American graphic arts by Dale Roylance and twentieth-century American printmakers by Nancy Finlay and a checklist of the exhibition.

## Sustaining principles

By J.M. Richards

MARIO SALVADORI:  
Why Buildings Stand Up  
The Strength of Architecture  
311pp. W.W. Norton. £8.75.  
0 393 01401 0

How refreshing to be faced with a book whose title unmistakably defines what it is about. The first sentence of the author's preface reads: "This book was written for those who love beautiful buildings and wonder how they stand up." Ugly buildings, of course, stand up for just the same reasons, but that does not lessen the value of a clear explanation, in layman's language, of the engineering principles that lie behind, and contribute to the shaping of, different types of building, ancient and modern.

That is what Mario Salvadori, an eminent American civil engineer, has provided. Only one chapter strays somewhat outside his declared purposes, the Second, devoted to the pyramids of Egypt. We do not need to be told why pyramids stand up; they can hardly do anything else. In fact if any stone or brick building collapses totally, a pyramid is what it becomes. That chapter is devoted instead, quite interestingly if not so relevantly, to the procedures that were involved in building the pyramids and the special purposes they served.

The treatment is not evolutionary. There are chapters dealing each with a single famous building, chosen to illustrate a particular constructional principle and concluding with a brief survey of other developments of the same kind. Beauvais Cathedral, for example, represents the dynamism of Gothic construction with its counterbalancing stresses of vault and pier and buttress. Hagia Sophia represents the spatial triumphs of dome construction; Brooklyn Bridge represents the principle of cable suspension. There is an admirable chapter on the Eiffel Tower. Between these are chapters describing the structural nature of various building types such as the skyscraper, and others explaining about reinforced concrete and about the still newer pneumatic structures.

A lot of attention is paid to recent specialized developments in concrete

like folded plate and hanging dish roofs and shell dams, which clearly mean much to the author; "exciting" is a frequently used epithet. Here there is a perhaps natural - bias towards American examples. As a consequence some of the pioneers of concrete technique - Robert Maillart in Switzerland, Torroja in Spain, Candela in Mexico - get very little mention.

Professor Salvadori's explanations of building and engineering methods are satisfactorily clear and assume no prior technical knowledge in the reader, but one wishes that when he is trying to evoke a picture of the resulting architecture his writing did not become instead verbose and fulsome. Here is a sample passage from his chapter on Hagia Sophia:

"The message created by Anthemius for his Emperor, his patriarch, and his people rang loud and clear. This space, a symbol of the protective love of the Church and Empire, is covered by curved surfaces, which embrace and protect the people humbly assembled to pray for the protection of the great King of the Jews, God-made-man for their salvation. But the magnificent interior does also signify the greatness of the state and gives assurance of its strength and magnanimity. The light supporting the dome made it into a 'dome of heaven' and elevated the spirit to celestial thoughts; but also served to flood down the domes, reminding worshippers of the richness of the Emperor's palace. Meanwhile the church orientation pointed to the rising sun and to the hopes of the world, and the altar under the eastern half-dome roofing the apse lay in its semi-darkness to increase the mystery of the light. Seldom have two such contrasting messages as those incorporated in a single harmonious and mesmerizing architectural ambience."

There is more in this vein, no doubt the product of the author's genuine enthusiasm for the whole nature and purpose of the book. A more practical use of language, unfortunately, is the numerous line-illustrations, which play a vital part, are a model of clarity. They are the work of Sarallinda Hooker and Christopher Ragia and are skillfully amplified and delicately drawn.

## LITERARY CRITICISM

# The was which is

By C. W. E. Bigsby

LEE JENKINS:  
Faulkner and Black-White Relations  
A Psychoanalytic Approach  
301pp. Columbia University Press \$26.  
0 231 04744 4

RONNIE J. BARTHOLO:  
Black Time  
Fiction of Africa, the Caribbean, and the United States  
209pp. Yale University Press. £11.  
0 300 02573 4

William Faulkner once observed that "time is a fluid condition which has no existence except in the momentary avatars of individual people. There is no such thing as was - only is. It was existed there would be no grief and sorrow." He might have said the same of a group of people or a race. For, paradoxically, the black American and the southerner are united not only by the power and authority which they are prepared to concede to the past but by their conviction that the past is not simply a force giving shape to experience or providing a clue to present action: it is itself a present fact.

Black and southerner unite in feeling themselves the victims of history, in some sense dislodged from time, spectators of their own threatened inconsequence. The battle which they separately wage is to claim a right of access to the present through reclaiming and hence transforming an ambiguous past.

The black writer's ambivalence with regard to history is understandable. It has to be re-invented before it can be claimed; it has to be granted the retrospective grace of heroic resistance and denial before it can be integrated into a myth of personal and social emancipation. So, too, for the southern writer. The past contains so much which will not bear inspection that it is recast as legend, reconstructed as an elaborate myth.

One of the strengths of Lee Jenkins's *Faulkner and Black-White Relations* is that it identifies this critical truth and discusses with genuine insight the conflicts which generated Faulkner's attitude to his black characters. Jenkins attacks Faulkner for what he sees as his misrepresentations of the Negro. He indicts his "racism", his "tendency to lighten reality to the level of the symbolic and mythic, and to distort the reality of black life for his own aesthetic ends". In support he invokes both the novels and Faulkner's interviews. The charge is a crude one, requiring more than the rhetorical indictments which rather too many critics in the past decade or so have substituted for close analysis. For the most part, Professor Jenkins provides that analysis.

He is plainly correct in insisting on the reductiveness implied in Faulkner's observation that "the will of man to prevail will even take the nether channel of the black man, black race, before it will, relinquish, succumb, be divided into 'organism' and 'egotistical', he suggests, then all George Eliot's novels can be seen as dramatizing a conflict between those elements.

## I against we

By John Batchelor

K. M. NEWTON:  
George Eliot: Romantic Humanist  
A Study of the Philosophical Structure of her Novels  
215pp. Macmillan. £12.  
0 333 28101 2

Speaking of George Eliot, John Bayley remarks in *The Romantic Survival* that the novelists, rather than the poets, of the nineteenth century "are the real beneficiaries of the great Romantic endowment", and it is widely agreed that the memory of the Romantic poets has fed the characterizations of Maggie Tulliver and Will Ladislaw. K. M. Newton's book is a systematic inquiry into the possibility that George Eliot is in most aspects of her work "If the impulses of the Romantics can be

feared". As Jenkins rightly indicates, Faulkner's work, the implied insult is both softened and intensified by a sentimentality compounded of guilt and compassion which is never sufficiently remote from contempt. For it is less a case of the will of man to prevail even taking the nether channel of the black race, than of it especially taking this channel. And this, in turn, is less an expression of irony than of a kind of blundering, even well-meaning, insolence.

Thus, Faulkner projects Dilsey, in *The Sound and the Fury*, into an indefinite future which in no way differs from the past; she is presented as nothing more than a passive resource of understanding, to be unlocked by white desperation. It is as though Faulkner never really learnt the lesson he seems to be offering in *Light in August*. The Negro endures precisely because he is kept out of time and hence remains immune to its ironies. But as a consequence, of course, he is also denied access to his victories. As Faulkner himself observed in his Nobel Prize address, endurance alone is not enough: man must prevail. And that victory can only be won within time. If *Go Down Moses* and *Intruder in the Dust* are evidence that he did come to appreciate the existence of a density and an active dimension to black life which he had earlier been inclined to dismiss or ignore, they never quite redeemed his earlier portraits. He could never entirely liberate the blacks from his own myths in which he presumed they and he were mutually entrapped.

For Bonnie J. Barthold, in *Black Time: Fiction of Africa, the Caribbean and the United States*, the black disposition from time is not simply a product of American experience. It unites, in particular, fiction writers of Africa and America. She quotes Chinua Achebe's observation that the blacks must rebuild "the foundations of the past" without retreating from the present. And this is, indeed, the special task which so many black writers have assumed. Just how sophisticated this engagement with a past needs to be, which must not be sentimentalized if it is to have strength of both an enabling myth and a cultural weapon, is made apparent in this intelligent and concerned account.

The marks of the dissertation, from which the book grew, remain, in the intensity with which the thesis is pressed. But, for the most part, it offers a narrative account of black writing which describes the way in which historical disruptions are subsumed in a developing myth of continuity without itself relapsing into a mere celebration of persistence or a portrait of unquestioned commonality. The disjunction between personal and public time, between a self located on centre stage, and a society which dislodges that self from the stage altogether, is potentially the source of a tragic or ironic experience. But Professor Barthold sees it equally as a source of energy and as evidence of a concern with the problems of time, definitive of black writing. She argues that it has been productive of a subtle and distinctive literature.

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